Identifying Language Needs of ESL Students in a Canadian University Based Intensive English Language Program

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Abstract

This study investigated the needs of adult ESL learners intending to pursue higher education in Canada. Its chief purpose was to enable educators and administrators to design ESL programs that would prepare students to function at optimal levels in academic and social settings during their university studies. The study adopted a mixed research method that was predominantly qualitative in its orientation and narrative in its implementation. It focused on an Intensive English Language Program (IELP) offered at an Ontario university. Using a holistic approach, the study sought to represent the various perspectives of all the participants in the program: the students, the instructors, and the administrators. Analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data gathered from 17 students, 6 instructors, and 1 administrator in the IELP showed that to a large extent the academic needs of ESL learners in the IELP were generally not being met. Most notably, the study found that learners were not receiving sufficient training in speaking and listening skills, a factor that contributed to their sense of insecurity and lack of confidence in their ability to communicate successfully in academic and social settings. The study also revealed that the solutions to many of the problems it identified lay not in the classroom but in the way the ESL program was structured administratively. One major recommendation to come out of the study is that programs like the IELP should be restructured so as to give them greater flexibility in meeting individual needs. While the study labored under certain limitations and did not achieve all of its goals, it did succeed in creating awareness of the problems and in establishing a methodological approach that can serve as a framework within which future research may be conducted in this somewhat neglected area.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Canada has become a magnet for students from other countries wishing to study abroad in an English-speaking environment. In 2008, 79,459 foreign students (so-called "international students") came to study in Canada, and of these, 36,734 were at the university level (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2008). South Korea (13,922), China (9,648) and Japan (3,671) were the top three source countries for foreign students from Asia. One third (21,476) of the total number of foreign students chose Ontario as their destination in 2007 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2008).

Those students whose primary language is not English often find, when they actually arrive in Canada, that they are unable to use English effectively in academic and social settings, even though they may have (a) achieved high scores on standardized tests such as the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), IELTS (International English Language Testing System), or TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication); (b) undergone a certain period of English language training in their home country; and (c) had a certain amount of cultural orientation. The preparation that these students receive for studying in Canada is often not adequate for their needs. Thus, identifying the language needs of international students in Canada and the areas of deficiency in the preparation they receive is an essential first step in addressing the problem of the low level of English-language competency among foreign students in this country.

Background of the Problem

For students studying outside their home country in an environment where their first language is not the medium of instruction, successful second-language learning is vital, and identifying language-learning needs is viewed as an important step in achieving

this success (Bridley, 1986; Long, 2005; Richterich & Chancerel, 1980; West, 1994). Richterich & Chancerel state that:

> Everything starts from him [the student] and everything goes back to him. It is not merely in relation to him, but with him, and depending on his resources (time, available cash, personality, etc.) that his learning objectives will be defined, that the methods of judging when and how they have been attained will be selected, and that a curriculum of learning (by curriculum we understand all the means employed to attain the objectives: teacher, teaching materials, technical aids, methods, timetable, etc.) will be made available to him. (pp. 4-5)

This paradigm, with the student squarely at the center of the approach to second/foreign-language teaching and learning, constitutes the framework within which to identify and analyze the language needs of the students. Once these needs have been determined, learning objectives can be formulated, so that instructors and administrators can either create new systems or improve existing ones in order to achieve language-learning outcomes more successfully.

In the area of language learning, needs assessment is an ongoing process, one that requires constant reiteration. As Ostler (1980) has noted, "academic populations change over time, suggesting periodic assessments of the current students' requirements and abilities to see if changes in the population have also brought a change in needs" (p. 489). The individual language needs of foreign students at Canadian universities are becoming increasingly varied, given the greater diversity of backgrounds from which they have been coming in recent years. Furthermore, Tomlinson (2005) has observed that what language learners want to do in the classroom often seems to conflict with what they need

to do. If this is true, then it is imperative that we take a fresh look at the needs in order to understand why the conflict arises.

To date, the studies that have been conducted in the area of language needs in second-language acquisition, whether in terms of assessment or analysis, have focused primarily on one particular ethnic or linguistic group. For example, Sun's (1987) study involved a focus group consisting of Chinese visiting scholars and graduate students at a Canadian university. Similarly, Davis and McDaid (1992) used a focus group of Vietnamese high-school students. Clearly, there is a need to undertake a cross-cultural, cross-linguistic needs assessment and needs analysis so as to obtain an up-to-date picture of the broad range of needs of foreign students who use English as a second language in their academic work.

This study will enhance the current understanding of the language needs of foreign students in Canadian universities by exploring the experience of a cross-section of international students in one specific intensive English language program offered by a Canadian university.

The University English Language Program (ELP)

The English Language Program (ELP) examined here has been in operation for over twenty years, providing English language instruction at an Ontario university to students who use English as a second or foreign language.

The ELP is organized around five language-learning areas: reading, writing, speaking, listening, and grammar. There are six levels of study in the program, from preparatory to advanced. Students are tested for their degree of proficiency in English and are then placed in the appropriate level in the program. The duration of instruction at each

ELP level is 14 weeks, with 25 hours of class a week focusing on the five language areas listed above.

The ELP also organizes social activities, events, and trips for the students with the purpose of introducing them to the richness of Canadian cultural and social life in the local area.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to contribute to (a) a better understanding of the language needs of international students who attend an English language program at a Canadian university by investigating what these students believe they need most in order to communicate successfully and fluently in academic and social settings; and (b) the improvement of English language programs and/or academic programs in general at Canadian universities.

Research Questions

Main Questions

1. What specific skills and subject matter do international students think they need to learn in order to succeed academically in an English language program in Canada?

2. What specific skills do international students think they need to learn in order to succeed socially in an English-speaking environment?

Subquestions

1. Overall, what language skills do international students see as the most important?

2. What specific language skills do international students think they need to have in order to succeed academically in an English language program in Canada?

3. What specific language skills do international students think they need to have in order to succeed socially in an English-speaking environment?

4. What factors, in particular, do international students think prevent them from communicating effectively in academic and social settings in Canada?

5. Are there significant differences in the needs of individuals who are from the *same* ethnic and linguistic backgrounds?

6. Are there significant differences in the needs of individuals who are from *different* ethnic and linguistic backgrounds?

Rationale

Recalling my own experiences as an international student in the program, I was interested in exploring the experiences of current international students. Despite the research that has been done so far in the area of second language acquisition and methods used in language teaching, international students still find themselves at a significant disadvantage when they are communicating in English with native English speakers in academic and social settings in an English-speaking environment. Either the research has not been directed at the root of the problem or the results of the research are being ignored in the English language training programs that these students attend. In either case, there is, anecdotally, a clearly demonstrated need to identify the sources of the difficulty that international students have in communicating in English as they pursue further studies in Canada.

Structural Framework

Most students in the program studied here intend to pursue a university education in Canada. Their purpose, therefore, goes beyond the desire for ordinary conversational

skills to the uses of English suited to their academic interests. Their objectives are consistent with the approach known as English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

In ESP, as in other learner-centered approaches to second language instruction, the learners' needs and expectations are given priority over the commitment of the instructor or the program as a whole to a particular theory of how second languages should be taught. Thus, the focus would be on learners' participation and what contributes most to their progress rather than on what the instructor thinks should be emphasized in the second language classroom. ESP is, therefore, a practical and instrumental approach rather than a theory-driven method.

Importance of the Study

This study is the first of its kind to identify the language needs of international students enrolled in an English Language Program in Ontario, Canada. What is unique about this study is that it allows the students themselves to identify what they think they need to learn in order to be able to succeed in academic and social settings in the English-speaking environment of Canadian universities.

It was expected that this study would produce practical suggestions and valuable insights into language acquisition that will benefit not only ESL students, instructors, and administrators in the ELP and other ESL programs, but also the creators of ESL teaching and learning materials. Further, it is hoped that the findings and recommendations of this project will be useful to those working with similar programs in other languages.

Conclusion

With the growing demand for accountability in public life and education, the language needs of students who are acquiring English as a second or foreign language are increasingly coming under scrutiny. The needs of students from different linguistic,

ethnic, and cultural backgrounds appear to be distinct and varied, and language instruction that uses generic programs and materials not designed with the needs of specific groups of students in mind can, therefore, be ineffective in helping learners achieve functional fluency in English. For a language teaching program to be successful, it must take into account unique individual needs. This study aims at identifying the language needs of a specific group of students who are attending an intensive English language program at one Canadian university. The results of this study will have implications for course outlining, lesson planning, curriculum development, teaching material selection, and teaching method implementation, as well as for the learner's awareness of his or her own role in the language-learning process.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

With a view to providing a conceptual framework for the present study, this survey of the literature will begin with an examination of selected theories of second language acquisition and theoretical explanations of second language learning that are of particular relevance to the approach being pursued here. Issues, such as language proficiency, learner beliefs about learning a second language, motivation in language learning, and types of language learners, will also be addressed. Given that the specific focus of this study is on the use of English as a second language in academic settings, special emphasis will be given to the concept of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) and its implications for designing programs in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and the wider field of English for Specific (or Special) Purposes (ESP) Finally, an overview will be provided of studies on language needs, including the methods used in identifying and analyzing language needs. The chapter will conclude by drawing all these various strands together into a unified theoretical framework within which the present study was conducted.

Second Language Acquisition

While the literature contains various definitions of "second language acquisition," a widely accepted one is that of Nunan (1999), who characterized it as "the psychological and social processes underlying the development of proficiency in a second language" (p. 314). Theorists and researchers have, over the years, sought to analyze the implications of this definition. Some, such as Ellis (2003), have noted that the psychological and social processes involved in second language acquisition are composed of two components: (a) "meaning-focused" language learning, and (b) "form-focused" language learning. Some theorists, such as Krashen (1982), take the view that in the process of language

"acquisition," meaning-focused language learning is by far the more important process. For him, language acquisition represents the "unconscious" learning that takes place when attention is focused on meaning rather than on language form.

Theoretical Approaches to Explaining Second Language Learning

Several theories have been proposed to explain how individuals develop the ability to communicate in a second language. In this section, however, only those theories that are relevant to the objectives of the present study will be discussed.

Krashen's Monitor Model

Stephen Krashen's theory of second language acquisition has had a great influence on second language teaching practice. His theory, known as the "monitor model," consists of five hypotheses: (a) the acquisition-learning hypothesis, (b) the monitor hypothesis, (c) the natural order hypothesis, (d) the input hypothesis, and (e) the affective filter hypothesis. Although not directly testable, Krashen's work has given rise to much research in language learning.

1. *The acquisition-learning hypothesis*: Krashen proposes that there are two ways for adult language learners to develop knowledge of a second language: (a) acquisition, and (b) learning. Acquisition refers to the nonconscious processes by which an individual absorbs the language of the environment by being exposed to and engaging in natural, fluent communication with other individuals in his or her surroundings. Learning, on the other hand, refers to the conscious process by which the rules of a language are made explicit and are consciously applied by the learner to the production of meaningful discourse in that language. This might take the form of self-teaching or of formal language instruction provided by a teacher.

2. *The monitor hypothesis*: Krashen hypothesized that once the rules of a given language are learned, they perform the role of a monitor in the planning, editing, and correcting of discourse generated by the learner. This self-watching, self-correcting activity is an important component in second language acquisition and is essential to achieving native-like competence.

3. *The natural order hypothesis*: Krashen based this hypothesis on the research finding that like young first language learners, second-language learners seem to acquire the features of the target language in a predictable sequence. Contrary to common sense, rules that are not difficult to state and are, therefore, easy to learn are not necessarily the first to be acquired by the second-language learner. This implies that the acquisition of grammatical structures follows a "natural order" and is, therefore, predictable.

4. *The Input Hypothesis*: Krashen suggested that acquisition and comprehension occur optimally when the second-language learner is exposed to input that contains forms and structures slightly beyond his or her current level of competence. Krashen represents this as i + 1.

5. *The Affective Filter Hypothesis*: The affective filter hypothesis seeks to explain why there is a lack of progress in the second-language learner's competence when adequate input is available. The affective filter deals with affective variables, which play a facilitative, but noncausal, role in second language acquisition. These variables include motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety. The filter controls what is noticed and what is acquired by the learner, but it is influenced largely by the learner's state of mind or disposition while the learning is taking place. Language acquisition is inhibited if the learner lacks motivation or self-confidence, or is anxious or under stress at the time he or she is learning.

Swain's Output Hypothesis

A counterpoint to Krashen's work, particularly his Input Hypothesis, is the Output Hypothesis developed by Merrill Swain (1985) as an explanation for how second language learners acquire new forms in language production. Swain's conclusions were based on research on immersion programs in Canada, where the students had received abundant comprehensible L2 input and achieved very high levels of L2 listening and reading comprehension, but lacked native-like fluency in L2 production. Swain (1985) focused on linguistic output, as the name of the hypothesis indicates, on the grounds that language learners acquire language when they attempt to transmit a message but fail to deliver and have to try again and again until they succeed. Swain maintains that output is responsible for at least some of the gains in language competence achieved by second language learners. According to her, output increases competence through what she calls the process of "being pushed." She writes:

> Simply getting one's message across can and does occur with grammatically deviant forms and sociolinguistically inappropriate language. Negotiating meaning needs to incorporate the notion of being pushed toward the delivery of a message that is not only conveyed, but that is conveyed precisely, coherently, and appropriately. Being "pushed" in output … is a concept parallel to that of the i + 1 of comprehensible input. Indeed, one might call this the "comprehensible output" hypothesis. (pp. 248-249)

In the decade following the initial publication of the Output Hypothesis, Swain (1995) went on to expand her theory to include three functions related to output (Kumaravadivelu, 2006):

1. The *noticing/triggering function*, by which language learners become aware of the gaps or deficiencies in their knowledge of the second language.

2. The *hypothesis-testing function*, by which language learners check the correctness of the assumptions they have made about the language they are learning. The learner does not usually start using a particular feature of the language correctly as soon as he or she acquires it. Rather, he or she starts using the item tentatively, trying out the different ways in which it might be used and being sensitive to positive and negative feedback. Through this testing, the learner himself or herself begins to get a better understanding of that item's function and the constraints on its use.

3. The *metalinguistic (reflective) function*, by which the learner becomes consciously aware of the phonological, lexical, and grammatical constraints on the language as he or she seeks to produce output that is not only technically correct but also appropriate to the communication context.

The Information Processing Model

Cognitive psychology views second language acquisition as the building up of knowledge systems that can eventually be called upon automatically in engaging in the activities of language-based communication. Richard Schmidt (1990), a cognitive psychologist whose work has focused on the role of "noticing" in second language learning, has championed the notion that second-language learners "notice" the language they are attempting to learn—everything the learner comes to know about the language was first "noticed" consciously. This implies that all adult language learning is the result of conscious effort until it reaches the stage of automaticity.

The Interactionist Position Theory

Like the cognitive psychologists and the information processing model, Interactionists and the Interactionist Position Theory emphasize the role of modification that results from the interaction involved in conversation. They use this perspective to analyze the ways in which learners gain access to new knowledge about the language they are learning when they engage with an interlocutor using that language (Lightbown & Spada, 1997). Conversational exchanges provide both models and continual feedback to the learner, who gradually adjusts performance and, hence, builds fluency and communicative competence.

In an adult language program, then, these theories imply that the learners must receive meaningful input and have the opportunity to practice using it, consciously seeking and incorporating the feedback from other speakers until language use becomes automatic.

Views on the Nature and Achievement of Language Proficiency

Clark (1975) has defined language proficiency as "the ability to receive or transmit information in the test language for some pragmatically useful purpose within a real-life setting" (p. 10). Regarding the nature of language proficiency, Richards (1985) holds the view that: (1) language proficiency relates to communicative performance; (2) proficiency is task-related; (3) the degree of skill required to carry out the task can be defined and assessed; and (4) different subskills or enabling abilities will be brought into play according to the nature if the task involved. Proficiency can thus be thought of as the mobilization of subskills.

There are three major theoretical views on the nature of language proficiency, based on three broad schools of thought in regard to language itself:

1. *The Structural View*: Based on the principles of structuralism, namely, that language is a system of encoding meaning by means of elements that stand in structural relation to each other, this view sees language proficiency as the mastery of the elements of such a system and the ability to manipulate the structural relations that exist between and among them with a high degree of success.
2. *The Functional View*: Based on the belief that language is a means of expressing meaning, this view sees proficiency as the perfecting of one's ability to express oneself clearly, the focus being on the semantic and communicative dimensions rather than on the structural and grammatical aspects of the language.
3. *The Interactional View*: Based on the definition of language as a vehicle for self-expression as well as for the establishing and maintaining of good social relations, this view measures proficiency in terms of how well the learner is able to negotiate the social aspects of language use in real-life settings (Pütz, 2007).

The *functional* and *interactional* theories of language proficiency are in keeping with the learner-centered, experience-based, communicative approach to L2 teaching and, hence, with an ESP approach (Pütz, 2007, Richards & Rodgers, 1986). These two theories about language proficiency imply that second language teaching programs should be aimed at assisting second-language learners to use the second language effectively and appropriately in real-life contexts. The language tasks that the learners need to perform can be identified through needs analysis. Appropriate communication objectives can then be formulated, setting out what the learners will do, under what

conditions they will operate, and how well they are expected to perform, thus providing a set of criteria against which their performance can be judged. The notion of proficiency thus underpins the design of second language teaching programs in two ways. First, it serves as an overall guide for the program, insofar as the program aims to improve the learners' ability to operate in the target language in the situations that have been specified. Second, it provides a constant standard against which performance can be assessed, both by the instructors and by the learners themselves (Stern, 1983).

An important issue in the area of L2 proficiency is how to account for the differences in level of proficiency achieved by individual learners. Gardner (1985, 2005, 2009) has proposed the Social-Educational Model of Second Language Acquisition to account for such differences. According to this model, language achievement (i.e., level of proficiency attained) is influenced by two major variables: (a) ability, and (b) motivation. Ability includes both intelligence and language aptitude. Learners with higher ability can be expected to achieve higher levels of proficiency. However, this is not always the case, since motivation can act as a countervailing influence. Motivation will be discussed in greater detail under a separate heading later in this chapter. Here it is sufficient to say that learners with high levels of ability may not attain the expected degree of proficiency on account of lack of motivation. Another factor that comes into play in achieving proficiency is anxiety. Here the relationship is mutual. High levels of anxiety tend to lead to low levels of proficiency. Conversely, low levels of proficiency tend to undermine self-confidence and increase anxiety. A study by Gardner, Tremblay, and Masgoret (1997) found that objective measures of L2 proficiency correlate well with a number of variables, which they grouped into five clusters: (a) Self-Confidence in L2,

(b) Language Learning Strategies, (c) Motivation to learn L2, (d) Language Aptitude, (e) Orientation to Learning L2.

Along similar lines, Yashima (2002) did a study involving 297 Japanese university students in an EFL context to determine the influence of L2 proficiency, among other factors, on L2 verbal communication. The study was conducted within the framework of Gardner's (2005) Social-Educational Model and looked particularly at *willingness to communicate* (WTC), a concept that grew out of studies on L2-related anxiety. On the basis of his findings, Yashima has constructed a model of the relationship between L2 proficiency, confidence, international posture, and the learner L2 verbal communication. This model, the first to incorporate proficiency as an essential component in L2 output, is represented diagrammatically in Figure 1.

From the diagram it will be observed that L2 verbal proficiency is influenced by two sets of factors: (a) L2 learning motivation; and (b) language ability in listening, vocabulary, grammar, and reading. Motivation is influenced in turn by (a) the desire to learn, (b) motivational intensity (degree of motivation), and (c) international posture. (International posture is influenced by a number of factors, not all of which are relevant to every L2 learner.) Verbal proficiency in L2 in its turn influences L2 communication confidence both directly and indirectly. Proficiency affects the learner's sense of his or her own communication competence and his or her level of anxiety. A low estimation of competence produces low levels of confidence. Proficiency also correlates with communication anxiety. Low proficiency tends to cause high levels of anxiety, which can manifest itself in the classroom, on tests, and in ordinary use. Communication anxiety in these three areas lowers communication confidence. Conversely, high motivation may

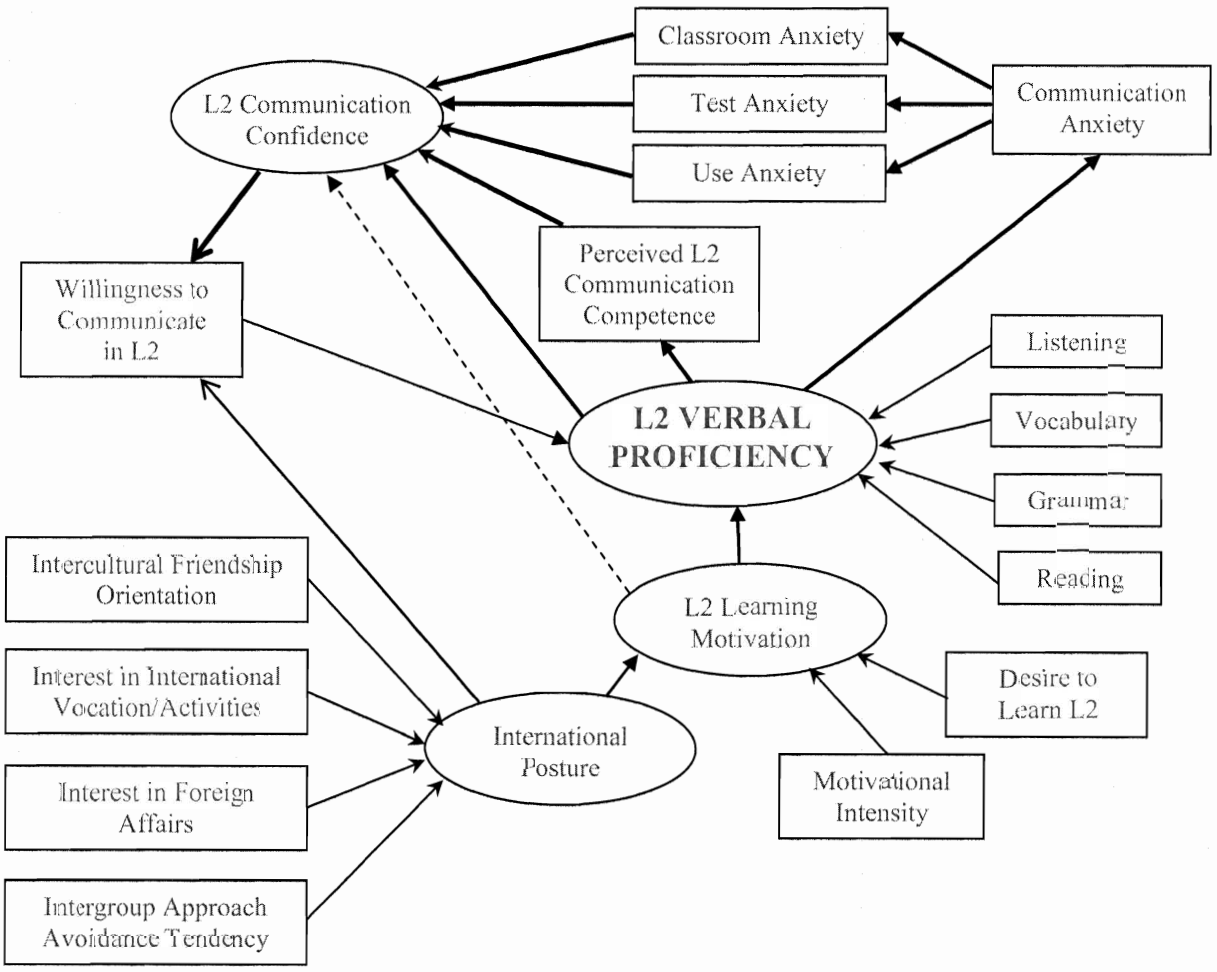

Figure 1. Yashima's L2 communication model incorporating proficiency.

Note. From "Willingness to communicate in a second language: The Japanese EFL context," by T. Yashima, 2002. *The Modern Language Journal, 86*(1), p. 61. Adapted with permission.

increase confidence. The higher the confidence, the greater the willingness to communicate in L2. Willingness to communicate verbally increases the learner's opportunities to practice L2, and increased practice in turn enhances proficiency. Thus, proficiency is a self-feeding process.

The factors that relate to communication proficiency need to be taken into account in a program that seeks to meet the needs of individual learners. Measures of aptitude, motivation, and anxiety are available and can be used to create an individual profile of each student in the program. Such a profile will help instructors to identify what is preventing individual learners from reaching the desired level of proficiency for those learners who are lagging behind.

Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)

The concept of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) was introduced in 1979 by James Cummins of the University of Toronto to draw attention to the difference between ordinary conversational fluency and the kind of language fluency required in academic settings (cited in Krashen & Brown, 2007). Cummins distinguished between CALP and Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and showed from empirical research that while it takes about 2 years to achieve fluency in BICS, it takes between 5 and 7 years to develop adequate CALP (Brown, 2004; Cummins, 2003; Laija-Rodriguez, Ochoa, & Parker, 2006; Roessingh, Kover, & Watt, 2005). The distinction between BICS and CALP was based on the observation that the academic use of language is considerably more abstract than the conversational use and that using academic language is more cognitively demanding, partly because of its relatively low level of paralinguistic and nonverbal cues (which aid in the apprehension of meaning) present in academic discourse. Conversational language, on the other hand, is "context-

embedded" in that it is rich in contextual cues that are accessible to both speaker and listener (Brown, 2004; Roessingh et al., 2005).

Krashen and Brown (2007) have extended the concept of CALP by identifying two components of academic proficiency that do not apply to conversational fluency: (a) knowledge of academic language (i.e., "form"), and (b) knowledge of specialized subject matter (i.e., "content"). To these two components, Krashen and Brown add another layer: strategies. They recognize specific strategies for each of the two components; some involve input, others output. However, all strategies that aid in the acquisition of academic language, whether input-related or output-related, are crucial in achieving CALP.

The concept of CALP has profound implications for ESL instruction and for the idea of English for Academic Purposes (EAP), a topic that will be discussed separately later. Brown (2004) proposes what she calls a "content-based ESL curriculum" (CBEC) that is designed to promote CALP. Brown's model puts the emphasis on higher-order thinking and critical thinking skills and on the use of writing to develop these skills. While it is clear such skills should be taught as a means of increasing the learners' CALP, it is not so clear whether learning strategies should be taught in the same rigorous way. Krashen and Brown (2007) raise the issue of whether strategies are *acquired* or *learned* (that is, discovered informally or through instruction). They conclude that some are acquired, others can be learned, and still others are innate. In regard to teaching learning strategies, they maintain that in the classroom setting it is necessary first to determine which students need instruction in learning strategies and which ones do not. For some students, learning strategies that were learned or acquired in L1 can be transferred to L2 (through the CUP mechanism). Krashen and Brown feel strongly that certain strategies,

such as the use of mnemonics, should not be taught at all (except in special circumstances), since they merely encourage learning which is often short-lived, but not true language acquisition (i.e., the ability to use the language). They also advise against teaching so-called "study skills," because these types of skills are not appropriate to language acquisition. Among the "innate" strategies that they say should not be consciously taught are predicting and visualizing when reading. On the whole, according to them, L2 instructors should avoid teaching metacognitive strategies. By way of summary, they offer the following categories of strategies that may be taught in the L2 classroom: (a) those that serve to make input more comprehensible, and (b) those that aid in content learning (especially problem-solving strategies). They suggest that the following strategies should not be taught, or if taught, used rarely and under special conditions: (a) those that promote language learning rather than language acquisition; and (b) so-called study skills that encourage deliberate memorization. Finally, strategies that should never be taught are those that people develop naturally and whose conscious use interferes with language acquisition and the learning of content. In an ESP setting, then, strategies might be taught that are related to the content or the discipline of study rather than to the language acquisition itself.

Learners' Beliefs about Learning a Second Language

Several studies in recent years have focused attention on the issue of learners' beliefs about second language acquisition. Elaine Horwitz (1988) designed an inventory to classify and measure learners' beliefs which has since then been used in numerous studies. Lightbown and Spada (2006) comment that most second-language learners, especially older ones, have strong opinions about how their instruction should be delivered and what teaching methods should be employed in the language classroom.

They note that these opinions are usually based on the learners' previous learning experiences and the assumption that a particular type of instruction provides the best way for them to learn. It can be concluded that there is a correlation between degree of proficiency in the language being learned and learners' beliefs, since the attitude that the learner brings to his or her learning will almost certainly influence his or her receptivity to what he or she is being taught. Thus, learners' beliefs about how they should be taught are a strong mediating factor in their experience in the language classroom.

Lightbown and Spada (2006) cite an earlier study by Carlos Yorio (1986) involving university students showed that international students learning English as a second language in an advanced communicative language program experienced high levels of dissatisfaction with the communicative instruction they received. The students in the study expressed concern about several aspects of their instruction, including, in particular, the absence of attention to language form, corrective feedback, and teacher-centered instruction. However, Yorio did not specifically examine the learners' progress in relation to their opinions about the instruction they received, as several of them were already convinced that their progress was being affected negatively by an instructional approach that was not consistent with their beliefs about the best ways for them to learn.

On the Role of Motivation in Second Language Learning

Motivation is almost universally recognized as an important factor for success in second language acquisition (Gardner, 1985). According to Oxford (1992), motivation determines the extent of active personal engagement in the learning of language learners. Oxford (2003) sees motivation in second language learning (L2 learning motivation and L2 motivation) in terms of the "desire to learn another language" (p. 275). Motivated individuals have clearly defined goals and make an effort to achieve them; they are

persistent in pursuing their goals and take pleasure in doing so; they believe they can achieve the goals they set for themselves and approach their tasks with self-confidence (Gardner, 2005). Dörnyei (2001a) notes that language learning is "a deeply social event" and that theories of L2 learning motivation, therefore, generally include "a prominent social dimension" (p. 4).

An early distinction was made by Gardner and Lambert (1972) between two types of motivation: (a) *integrative* motivation, and (b) *instrumental* motivation. Integrative motivation prompts people to learn a language for personal growth and cultural enrichment and springs from a genuine interest in the ethos of the people who speak that language. In contrast, instrumental motivation is in operation when people learn another language with more immediate or practical goals in mind. Learners with integrative motivation learn the language "in order to interact with and become similar to valued members of the target language community"; learners with instrumental motivation learn it for "the practical benefits it brings" (Richards, 2002, p. 14). The former are motivated by a desire to communicate with native speakers in a more satisfactory manner and have closer contact with them, the latter by a need to meet eligibility requirements or improve employment prospects (Littlewood, 1984). Thus, for the instrumentally motivated learner, language learning is a means to an end rather than an end in itself (Noels, 2001). Given that the integrative orientation to L2 learning involves positive attitudes towards the L2 community, it would appear that learners with integrative motivation would be more likely to achieve a higher level of proficiency and approximate native-like fluency more closely than those with an instrumental orientation; however, research in this area has produced mixed (and, therefore, inconclusive) results (Noels). Furthermore, several other types of orientation have been identified through empirical research that do not

strictly qualify as either integrative or instrumental, including intellectual stimulation, curiosity, and even media use.

In 1985, Gardner introduced the Socio-Educational Model of motivation, based largely on the integrativeness hypothesis. This model defined motivation in terms of three components: (a) effort expended to achieve a goal, (b) a desire to learn the language, and (c) satisfaction with the task of learning the language (Gardner, 1985). All three elements must be assessed in order to determine the learner's true motivation. The language motivation is influenced by two variables: (a) integrativeness, and (b) attitude toward the learning situation. This model gave rise to the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), which assesses these two variables with five measures. Integrativeness is measured by: (a) Attitudes toward the Target Language Group, (b) Interest in Foreign Languages, and (c) Integrative Orientation. Attitude toward the learning situation is measured by: (a) Attitudes toward the Language Course, and (b) Attitudes toward the Language Teacher (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995). The integrativeness hypothesis and the importance of having an integrative orientation have proved controversial, and several researchers and theorists have pointed out that integrativeness is highly context-dependent and is often not relevant to the situation of many L2 learners (Noels, 2001).

In response to challenges from other researchers and empirical evidence to support the existence of additional motivational factors, Gardner subsequently expanded his model. As it currently stands the AMTB consists of 11 scales that measure five constructs: (a) Motivation (MOT), (b) Integrativeness (INT), (c) Attitudes towards the Learning Situation (ALS), (d) Language Anxiety (ANX), and (e) Instrumentality (INO); and for non-adult learners, Parental Encouragement (PE) (Gardner, 2009). The five constructs and the corresponding scales used to measure them are given in Table 1.

Gardner (2009) has also clarified the concept of "integrativeness" as follows:

[A]n individual can be said to be integratively motivated if he/she:

1. Is motivated to learn the language
2. Exhibits integrativeness—i.e, an openness to other cultural communities
3. Has favourable attitudes toward the learning situation
4. Reflects low levels of language anxiety. (pp. 4-5)

The interrelationships between and among Gardner's five constructs and other elements in the Socio-Educational Model can be represented diagrammatically as shown in Figure 2.

The bi-directional arrows connecting Integrativeness with Attitudes to Learning Situation and Integrativeness with Instrumentality indicate that the two sets of relationships are positively correlated. In other words, learners with high levels of integrativeness tend to have a positive attitude to the learning situation and vice versa. Similarly, those with high integrativeness also exhibit high levels of instrumentality. The uni-directional arrows connecting Attitude to Learning Situation, Integrativeness, and Instrumentality to Motivation indicate that these orientations contribute to motivation but are themselves not affected by motivation. The dotted line for Instrumentality indicates a potential link. The uni-directional arrows connecting Ability and Motivation to Language Achievement indicate that these are the two major variables that account for individual differences in language learning outcomes. These two variables are independent of each other such that an individual learner with high levels of ability may not necessarily have correspondingly high levels of motivation and vice versa. Of the two uni-directional

Table 1

Constructs and Scales from the AMTB

Construct	Scales
Motivation	Motivational intensity Desire to learn the language Attitudes towards learning the language
Integrativeness	Integrative Orientation Interest in foreign languages Attitudes towards the target language community
Attitudes towards the Learning Situation	Language teacher evaluation Language course evaluation
Language Anxiety	Language class anxiety Language use anxiety
Instrumentality	Instrumental Orientation

Note. From "Gardner and Lambert (1959): Fifty years and counting," by R. C. Gardner, 2009. Canadian Association of Applied Linguistics Symposium presentation, Ottawa, Ontario (May). Retrieved June 21, 2009 from http://publish.uwo.ca/~gardner/. Reprinted with permission.

arrows connecting Language Achievement and Language Anxiety, the one on the left indicates that high levels of anxiety tend to produce low levels of achievement and vice versa; the one on the right indicates that low levels of achievement serve to increase the learners' anxiety while high levels of achievement have the opposite effect (Gardner, 2005).

While Gardner's (2005) theory of motivation is grounded in social psychology, other researchers have looked to cognitive psychology to formulate alternative theories (Dörnyei, 2003). One such theory is the Self-Determination Theory of Deci and Ryan (1985). This theory draws upon the earlier, widely used distinction between "intrinsic" and "extrinsic" motivation. Intrinsically motivated pursuits have no apparent rewards other than inner satisfaction while extrinsically motivated individuals pursue an activity in the hope of more tangible gains. As applied to second language learning, intrinsic motivation is the desire for the "enjoyment of language learning itself" and extrinsic motivation is the state of being "driven by external factors such as parental pressure, societal expectations, academic requirements or other sources of rewards or punishment" (Richards, 2002, p. 14). Intrinsically motivated learners tend to employ strategies that demand more effort and that enable them to process information more deeply. Extrinsically motivated learners, on the other hand, are generally satisfied with the bare minimum, and often put out as little physical and mental effort as possible. For the latter, the learning involved is merely a means to an end. For the former, it is the end in itself. The Self-Determination Theory sets up a continuum between the two extremes of this intrinsic/extrinsic polarity, from self-determined (intrinsic) at one end to controlled

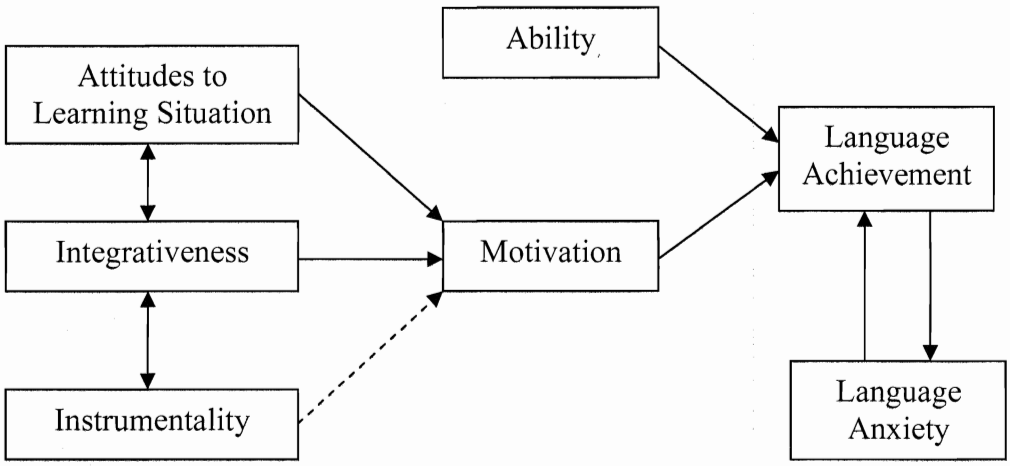

Figure 2. The socioeducational model.

Note. From R. C. Gardner, 2005. "Integrative motivation and second language acquisition." Canadian Association of Applied Linguistics and Canadian Linguistics Association Joint Plenary Talk, London, Ontario (May 30), p. 6. Retrieved June 21, 2009 from http://publish.uwo.ca/~gardner/. Adapted with permission.

(extrinsic) at the other. The continuum is divided into five segments: (a) *pure intrinsic regulation*; (b) *integrated regulation* (in the form of values that have been assimilated into the learner's belief system, worldview, and personal identity); (c) *identified regulation* (in the form of values that the learner identifies with on account of their utility or practical benefit); (d) *introjected regulation* (in the form of rules imposed from the outside, but accepted by the learner out of a sense of obligation and complied with to avoid guilt); and (e) *external regulation* (in the form of rewards or threats) (Dörnyei, 2001a).

Noels (2001) has sought to extend Deci and Ryan's (1985) Self-Determination Theory by combining it with Gardner's (2005) Social-Educational Model. She looks at motivational *orientations* (or attitudes) and identifies three categories: (a) *intrinsic,* (b) *extrinsic,* (c) *amotivation*. The first and second categories correspond to Deci and Ryan's categories. The third, amotivation, refers to the absence of motivation that comes from the feeling that what one does has no bearing on the outcome. As applied to L2 learning, learners with amotivation do what is expected of them out of necessity rather than choice, that is, because they have to, and they drop out as soon as it becomes possible to do so. The three orientations lie along a continuum ranging from completely self-determined behaviour to completely non-self-determined behaviour. The model is represented graphically in Figure 3.

Another theory of motivation that owes its orientation to cognitive psychology is *Attribution Theory*, first articulated in a systematic manner by Bernard Weiner in 1986. As outlined by Williams, Burden, and Al-Baharna (2001), Attribution Theory is

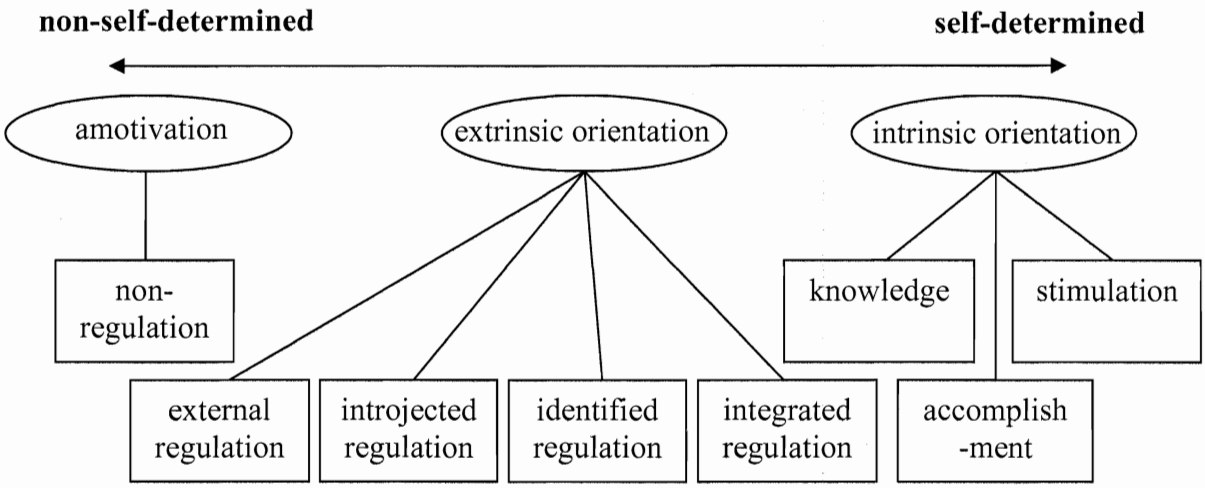

Figure 3. Orientation subtypes along the self-determination continuum (adapted by Noels from Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Note. From K. Noels, 2001, "New orientations in language learning motivation: Towards a model of intrinsic, extrinsic, and integrative orientations and motivation." In Z. Dörnyei & R. Schmidt (Eds.), *Motivation and second language acquisition,* p. 49. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i, Second Language Teaching and Curriculum Center. Reprinted with permission.

As outlined by Williams, Burden, and Al-Baharna (2001), Attribution Theory is concerned with the factors to which people attribute their successes and failures. According to the theory, how people explain the outcome of their efforts to themselves determines how they will act in the future and, hence, affects their motivation. In its early formulation, the theory identified four basic causes: (a) degree of ability, (b) amount of effort required or expended, (c) degree of difficulty of the task, and (d) chance (or luck). However, subsequent research, especially in the area of second language learning, led to the addition of several other factors, including intrinsic motivation, interest, teacher competence, and mood. In its current form, the theory is constructed around three dimensions or axes:(a) *locus of causality* (Is the cause internal or external to the learner?); (b) *stability* (Is the cause likely to change over time?); and (c) *controllability* (To what extent is the learning situation or outcome under the control of the learner?). In other words, the learner's motivation to pursue a learning task or succeed in it is influenced by whether he or she thinks that: (a) his or her success is caused by himself/herself or others, (b) the cause of his or her success is fixed or can be changed, and (c) he or she has control over the outcome of the task or not. The various combinations of these three variables produce eight attributional conditions or types, which can be represent in the form of a grid as shown in Table 2.

Research has shown that there are significant cultural differences in the way people make attributions. While Western learners are more likely to attribute their success to internal causes, Asian learners are far more likely to blame themselves for their failures, attributing such failures to their own lack of ability or the fact that they did not work hard enough (Williams et al., 2001). This insight is particularly important in

Table 2

Attributions of Success and Failure, Classified According to Locus, Stability, and Controllability

	Locus of Causality			
	internal		external	
controllability	stable	unstable	stable	unstable
controllable	typical effort	immediate effort	teacher bias	unusual help from others
uncontrollable	ability	mood	task difficulty	luck

Note. From "Making sense of success and failure: The role of the individual in motivation theory," by M. Williams, R. L. Burden, and Al-Baharna, 2001, p. 173. In Z. Dörnyei & R. Schmidt (Eds.), *Motivation and second language acquisition* (pp. 171-184). Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i, Second Language Teaching and Curriculum Center. Adapted with permission.

second language learning, where different cultural attitudes to success and failure often come together in one single classroom. This is particularly complicated in ESL programs, since instructors in such programs usually bring a predominantly Western orientation to the process and the learners are often predominantly non-Western.

Lightbown and Spada (2006) see motivation as a combination of two elements: (a) the learner's communicative needs, and (b) the learner's attitude to the community that uses the language. If the language learner needs to use the second language as a medium of communication in a wide range of social situations or as a means of fulfilling professional ambitions or other needs in the community process and the that uses the language, he or she will appreciate the communicative value of the second language and will, therefore, be motivated to acquire proficiency in it. Similarly, if the learner has a positive attitude towards the native speakers of the language, he or she will desire and seek out more contact or interaction with them.

Nunan (1999) identifies motivation as one of the primary psychological factors that determine the amount of effort a learner is willing to put into language learning. He notes that the amount of effort put into learning a language is determined by the learner's desire to achieve the goal of learning that language as well as by the learner's attitude toward learning it. This in some ways parallels Lightbown and Spada's bipartite view of motivation. Nunan, however, makes an important point in regard to the relationship between motivation and effort: he notes that the expenditure of effort in and of itself does not necessarily imply the presence of motivation. In other words, a motivated individual will expend effort in order to achieve a goal, but an individual expending effort may not necessarily be motivated.

Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) recognize three kinds of motivation that affect language acquisition: (a) integrative motivation, (b) instrumental motivation, and (c) social group identification. (The first two were discussed earlier in connection with Gardner & Lambert, 1972.) Dulay et al. add to Gardner and Lambert's earlier insights the observation that while both integrative and instrumental motivation seem to have a positive effect on the rate and quality of second language acquisition, they are more effective under certain other conditions of a social nature, which might constitute a *third* type. Dulay et al. define this third type of motivation, social group identification, as "the desire to acquire proficiency in a language or language variety spoken by the social group with which the learner identifies" (p. 50). For them, social group identification is similar to integrative motivation, but it goes beyond it. Learners with integrative motivation for learning a new language wish to participate in the social or cultural life of the target language speakers without necessarily giving up their identification with their own native language group. On the other hand, learners who are motivated by social group identification want social and cultural participation with the group not merely as outsiders, but as members of the group. This type of motivation is often seen among immigrants learning the language of the country to which they have immigrated.

Failure to achieve native-like fluency in the second language, particularly among adult second-language learners, should not be taken as evidence of lack of motivation. Even in a group of highly motivated second-language learners, there will always be some who are more successful than others. This is sometimes the result of differences in language-learning aptitude among the learners or of clashes between the teaching style of the instructor and the learning style and preferences of the individual learners. Differences in the success rate of motivated language learners may also be accounted for

by the social dynamic or power relationship that exists between the first and second language (Lightbown & Spada, 1999).

According to Lightbown and Spada (1999), teachers have no direct influence on a learner's intrinsic motivation for learning a second language. The best way for the teacher to relate to the learner's motivation is to make the classroom a supportive environment in which learners are stimulated and engaged in activities appropriate to their age, interests, and cultural background, and, most importantly, to ensure that their learning gives them an opportunity to experience success. Teachers can also be supportive, reinforcing, and well organized, plan interesting classroom activities, encourage cooperative behaviour, and be consistent and fair to all the students (Gardner, 2005). Studies by Gardner and his colleagues (cited in Gardner, 2005, 2009) have found that the classroom environment has a marked influence on the learners' integrative motivation, with learners showing higher integrative motivation in classes taught by highly motivated teachers and in classes with a student-centred program.

Several other researchers have focused on how "significant others" such as L2 instructors can create a supportive environment that will facilitate intrinsic motivation. As Noels (2001) describes it, the individual L2 learner has three inherent psychological needs: (a) the need for *autonomy* (being in control of one's own actions), (b) the need for a sense of *competence* (being effective in dealing with one's life), and (c) the need for *relatedness* (being connected to and esteemed by others and society as a whole). Failure to have these needs met undermines the self-motivation of the learner. In order to meet these needs, L2 instructors need to provide L2 learners with appropriate *feedback*. To promote a sense of autonomy, L2 instructors need to give learners choices, encourage them to make their own decisions, and commend them when they take the initiative in

their own learning; on the other hand, they must avoid using threats and imposing deadlines, artificial goals, and extrinsic incentives and rewards. To foster a sense of competence, L2 instructors can offer learners praise for correct performance and suggestions (without criticism) for improvement when necessary. To contribute to a sense of relatedness, L2 instructors can get personally involved in the learners' progress and provide caring attention (Noels). A 1999 study by Noels and her colleagues found that positive teacher feedback on how to improve competence increased intrinsic motivation (cited in Noels, 2001).

Research by Julkunen (2001) has explored the role of motivation in the classroom in terms of Situation-Specific Motivation and Task-Specific Motivation. His study involved three learning situations: (a) individual, (b) cooperative, and (c) competitive. As well, there were two types of tasks: (a) open (several possible correct answers), and (b) closed (only one possible correct answer). His findings are that a cooperative learning situation provides the greatest motivation for both high and low achievers, and that open tasks have more motivating power than closed ones. In discussing task motivation, he notes that tasks that involve "an optimal amount of uncertainty and unpredictability" (p. 34) have the greatest motivating power, and he points to language games as an excellent example of this principle.

Motivation does not necessarily remain constant and is always subject to the possibility of declining (or, less often, of rising; Gardner, 2009). According to Nunan (1999), some of the factors that precipitate a decline in motivation are:

- Lack of success as a result of time constraints
- Lack of perception of progress
- Uninspired (or uninspiring) teaching

- Boredom
- Perceived lack of relevance of instructional materials, and
- Lack of awareness of the goals of the instructional program.

Nunan (1999) presents strategies that teachers can use to keep their learners motivated and thus counteract the tendency towards motivation decline. These include:

- Making instructional goals explicit to learners
- Breaking learning down into sequences of achievable steps
- Linking learning to the needs and interests of the learners
- Allowing learners to bring their own knowledge and perspectives into the learning process
- Encouraging creative use of the language
- Helping learners to identify for themselves the strategies underlying the learning tasks they are engaged in, and
- Developing ways in which learners can record their own progress

Richards (2002) notes that the construct of motivation emphasizes the importance of individual differences among language learners and the fact that it is up to the learners themselves to determine the goals of their own language learning, to make the effort necessary to reach these goals, to commit themselves to the task, and to find ways to create the conditions that will motivate them to keep this commitment.

In general, motivation is a complex phenomenon and plays a significant role in second language acquisition. Despite its complexity, however, there are specific measures that instructors can take to ensure that they themselves do not contribute to the

decline of motivation in their learners, even if they do not have any direct role to play in creating and maintaining that motivation.

Theories of motivation played a significant role in the development of *Behaviourism* and its application to language learning and instruction in the 1950s and 1960s (Ehrman, 1996). For behaviorists, language acquisition is achieved through the processes of imitation, practice, reinforcement, and habit formation (Lightbown & Spada, 2004). In the behaviorists' view, all learning takes place through the same underlying process: language learners receive linguistic input from native speakers in their environment and, by means of this input, form "associations" between words and objects or events. These associations are said to become stronger as experiences are repeated. This implies that reinforcement through constant repetition has a positive effect on the learner's learning process. In the behaviorist approach, language learners receive praise or confirmation for successful imitations of patterns, and corrective feedback when their efforts are less successful. The learner is thus motivated to repeat those behaviours that receive praise and avoid those behaviours that elicit negative responses. For the behaviourist, it is through this process of behaviour modification that language learning takes place. Recent research has provided some confirmation of this theory. In a study of 41 adult learners attending ESL classes at the Portland State University Laboratory School, Reigel (2008) found that the rate at which the students individually received positive feedback in the form of affirmation, praise, laughter, and nonverbal responses from both teachers and peers showed a strong positive correlation with the rate at which they progressed individually from one level to the next in the program. He notes that "[l]evel advancement is a key indicator of progress in language acquisition" (p. 84).

The concept of positive reinforcement has been refined since it was first proposed by the behaviourists. Vigil and Oller (cited in Reigel, 2008) distinguish between two types of positive extrinsic feedback: *affective* (which includes praise, facial expressions, nods, etc.) and *cognitive* (which addresses the degree to which the speaker's message has been understood). Excessive positive feedback of either kind can induce a sense of smugness and complacency on the part of the learner, resulting in a plateau state of "fossilization." Negative feedback is necessary to destabilize this complacency and guard against fossilization. The task of the language instructor, then, is to maintain the right tension between positive and negative feedback, "striking a balance that offers enough encouragement to motivate the learner but not so much that errors are overlooked" (Reigel, p. 81). Feedback has also been treated attributionally, in which case a distinction is made between *effort feedback*, which is given when the learner makes an effort or tries hard to get it right, and *ability feedback*, which is given when the learner actually acquires the ability to get it right (Reigel). It should be noted that positive and negative feedback also play a significant role in Swain's Output Hypothesis, discussed earlier, especially in the *hypothesis-testing function* of output (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

The current trend in explaining the effects observed by the early behaviourists is to draw upon theories outside of linguistics. Several theorists, chiefly Larsen-Freeman, are now applying the concepts and principles of Chaos Theory and Complexity Theory to explain how both positive and negative feedback produce the effects they do (Reigel, 2008). These theorists draw upon such concepts as "positive feedback loops," "steady state," "initial conditions," and the "multiplier effect." Others, such as Holland (cited in Reigel), take a Systems Theory approach, seeking to understand how language-related

feedback affects the formation of neural networks in the brain of adult learners and leads to second language acquisition.

Since language development is traditionally viewed by behaviourists as the formation of habits through repetition and analogy (Kumaravadivelu, 2006), it may be assumed that adult second language learners start off at a disadvantage, as they have already formed certain habits in the process of acquiring their first language, habits that may interfere with the formation of new habits needed for the acquisition of the second language, particularly in speech production (Beardsmore, 1986; Lado, 1964). This might account for the extreme difficulty that some adult learners have in acquiring high levels of competence in the second language: they struggle to overcome the *automaticity* that results from deeply rooted habits of mind and deeply ingrained patterns of thought. The issue of L1 interference has been widely studied (Bhela, 1999; Picard, 2002) and the phenomenon is well documented. Lightbown and Spada (1997) mention that L2 learners not only transfer L1 grammatical structures into their production of L2, but even consciously overcompensate by rejecting certain L2 features because they resemble too closely the corresponding feature in L1. The work of these researchers leads in the direction of remedial instruction, in which learning tasks are designed specifically to overcome the inhibitory influence of L1.

While behaviourism has largely fallen out of favour as a theoretical basis for second language teaching (Kumaravadivelu, 2006), Widdowson has pointed out that "[t]here must be some aspects of language learning which have to do with habit formation" and that "total rejection of behaviouristic theory is no more reasonable than total acceptance" (cited in Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 112). The ideas of behaviourism, particularly the one that sees linguistic behaviour as a habit, have considerable heuristic

value in addressing problems that adult ESL learners may face when attempting to break out of existing unconscious patterns of thought and consciously acquiring new ones. It must be kept in mind that reinforcements are not merely extrinsic "rewards" and "punishments," but, much more importantly, constitute "input" about the learner's progress and performance, and thus provide valuable insights that facilitate increasingly closer approximations to the standard form. Even highly motivated learners may occasionally go through low periods, during which extrinsic motivators or incentives fail to inspire, when progress appears to be stalled; the behaviourists suggest that facilitating behavioural change through the use of both positive and negative reinforcements may serve to restore the learner's motivation by providing continual feedback about performance and, therefore, mirroring back to the learner the progress he or she is making.

The common element among all these approaches to motivation is that a desire to learn, a sense that one can do so, and a reason for doing so enhance the language learning process. In an ESP setting, the reason is usually present, but it may become less salient when learning is slow or difficult. At such moments, external incentives, useful feedback, and a positive social environment may help to sustain or restore the learner's motivation. In an ESP environment, the program content itself may be a motivator, as it is related to the learner's goal attainment.

Theories on Types of Language Learners

According to Tyacke (1991), the most successful language learners are those who are capable of adapting the learning approach to the task. Apart from this broad description of learner types, Nelson (1995) identifies two basic approaches to learning: (a) global, and (b) analytic. A global learner is one who begins with the "big picture" and

seeks to understand how the details come together to make up this whole. This type of learner depends to a very high degree on context in making sense of his or her perceptions. The analytic learner, on the other hand, is one who begins with the details and uses them to assemble the whole. Such a learner is less dependent on the context for the purpose of understanding his or her perceptions. Ellis (1989) has suggested that the analytic learner might prefer formal (rule-based) language learning with an emphasis on accuracy, while the global learner might prefer a more communicative approach. Being aware of whether a given language learner is global or analytic in learning style can help language instructors to maximize the learning outcomes for that particular individual.

Another common way of classifying learners is by the sensory modality or modalities they tend to favour. Generally, three modalities are recognized: (a) auditory, (b) visual, and (c) kinesthetic (Ehrman, 1996). It must be remembered that individual learners may use a combination of sensory modalities in any given situation and may switch from one modality to another for different tasks (Wyman, 2001); however, it is the dominant modality that must be considered. Forcing individual learners to operate in a modality that they are not comfortable with could put undue stress upon them and slow down their progress. The learners' motivation may also be negatively affected by a learning environment that emphasizes one of their nondominant sensory modalities. Sensory modalities have particular relevance for second language learning, because the various language skills rely on specific sensory modalities. Listening skills rely on the auditory modality; in reading and writing the visual modality is dominant; in speaking it is the kinesthetic modality that operates. So-called visual learners may need special attention and help in a listening skills class, just as auditory learners may need to be

approached differently from visual learners when reading or writing activities are involved.

Researchers have found differences in sensory learning styles among learners from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. For example, in a cross-cultural study conducted in 1997 (cited in Park, 2001), Park found that Korean and Chinese learners are predominantly visual. Park cites several other studies that have produced similar findings. Likewise, studies have found sex differences in learning styles, which can be traced to culturally defined gender roles (Park). Cultural differences in learning styles have considerable significance for ESL or EAP programs that have a multicultural makeup. In such contexts, it is important to be sensitive to the fact that people of different cultures accord different values to the five senses, especially in regard to the efficacy of these senses for learning (Classen, 1999).

In the wake of the discovery that learners have different learning styles based on their dominant sensory modality, Multisensory Structured Language Instruction (MSLI) has received considerable attention. As the name suggests, MSLI employs multiple sensory modalities simultaneously in any given teaching situation. Sparks, Ganschow, Pohlman, Skinner, and Artzer (1992) investigated the effect of MSLI in the teaching of reading skills. Baltova (1999) and Bachetti (2003) examined the influence of MSLI in the teaching of listening skills through the use of videos with subtitles. Navarra and Soto-Faraco (2007) demonstrated the effectiveness of integrated audiovisual input in teaching second language learners to discriminate between L2 sounds as a possible first step towards learning to pronounce them. All the research so far has shown that the multisensory approach to second language learning is much more effective than a

monomodal approach, especially because it takes into account the fact that all learners may not use the same sensory modalities in approaching learning tasks.

Efforts to classify learners according to learning style have also focused on the cognitive preferences of the learner. Thus, some theorists distinguish between *sequential* learners and *random* learners, others between *concrete* and *abstract*, and still others between *deductive* and *inductive* (Ehrman, 1996). There is some overlap in these various ways of classifying learners, and the bipolarity of the distinction has the effect of making the system somewhat simplistic by reducing learning styles into just two categories. A different approach to classification is to focus on the personality of the learner. The most widely used system of classifying personality types is the Myers-Briggs system, which places the individual in a four-dimensional framework: (a) extraversion-introversion, (b) sensing-intuition, (c) thinking-feeling, and (d) judging-perceiving. This system includes most of the cognitive categories mentioned above.

A system that corresponds roughly to Myers-Briggs but focuses more on learning style than on personality is that of Kolb (cited in Andreou, Andreou, & Vlachos, 2008), whose Experiential Learning Theory distinguishes four types of learners based on two learning dimensions: *concrete vs. abstract* and *active vs. reflective*. In other words, learning takes place either through *concrete experience* (CE) or *abstract conceptualization* (AC) (on the *concrete-abstract axis*) in combination with *active experimentation* (AE) or *reflective observation* (RO) (on the *active vs. reflective axis*). Learners can be placed along these two axes to produce four learning styles: (a) *divergent* (CE+RO), (b) *assimilative* (RO+AC), (c) *convergent* (AC+AE), and (d) *accommodative* (AE+CE). It should be noted that these categories do not exclude each other, and a particular learner may fall somewhere between two categories or even represent a

combination of two or more categories in varying proportions. Furthermore, like personality, learning styles tend to persist over time, but are influenced by and vary with the situational context. That is, a given type of learner may adopt an uncharacteristic learning style for a specific task depending on the nature of the task.

Kolb's typology has been applied with promising results to second language learning. Early studies in the late 1980s and through the 1990s by researchers such as N. B. Jones, J. M. Reid, L. Rossi-Le, and others (cited in Andreou et al., 2008) revealed that second language learners generally had a preference for kinesthetic and tactile styles, preferring *concrete* and *active* approaches to learning the second language. A few studies have looked at the relationship between learning style and academic discipline and have found that students in the arts prefer kinesthetic, auditory, and individual learning, while students in the sciences favour abstract, reflective, and group learning (Andreou et al.).

In the context of English for Academic Purposes (EAP), which is the specific focus of the current study, the effect of academic discipline on second language learning is of considerable significance in terms of the individual learner's learning style and its effectiveness in achieving language proficiency. A study in 2008 by Andreou et al. of 452 undergraduate native Greek speakers studying at a university in Greece examined the interrelationship between academic discipline, gender, and ESL learning in the areas of phonology, syntax, and semantics. Their findings reveal that ESL learners in both the arts and the sciences have a preference for the divergent style in learning phonology and the accommodative style in learning syntax. For science students, the convergent learning style was associated with better performance in all three linguistic areas. However, for arts students, the assimilative style produced better performance in syntax, while the divergent style produced better performance in semantics. These findings have

implications for how EAP is taught in the classroom. The researchers recommend a balanced teaching style that does not emphasize one particular style at the expense of the others, but rather, employs a variety of modalities. Furthermore, they suggest that ESL instructors should use teaching methods that involve concrete experience (CE) and reflective observation (RO) when teaching phonology (pronunciation) and semantics (vocabulary), making ample use of handouts, videos, audiotapes, group discussions, etc., and encouraging the learners to participate actively by taking notes, reading written material, doing peer tutoring, and so on. Similarly, when teaching syntax (grammar), the ESL instructor should use methods that require active experimentation (AE) and concrete experience (CE), and involve problem solving.

The concepts that underlie Kolb's fourfold typology can be applied to Swain's (1985) Output Hypothesis, discussed earlier, and in particular to the three functions of output. The *noticing/triggering function* is related to concrete experience (CE) and reflective observation (RO); the *hypothesis-testing function* is related to active experimentation (AE) and concrete experimentation (CE); the *metalinguistic function* is related to abstract conceptualization (AC) and reflective observation (RO). Thus, noticing comes particularly easily to *divergent* (CE + RO) learners, hypothesis-testing to *accommodative* (AE + CE) learners, and metalinguistic awareness to *assimilative* (RO + AC) learners. Learners who have a learning style that makes it more difficult for them to perform a given output function will need to be helped along by the ESL instructor. For example, accommodative and assimilative learners will need to receive special attention with noticing, while divergent learners will need special help with hypothesis testing and metalinguistic awareness. These theoretical formulations constitute a first step in the

process of meeting the individual needs of the second language learner. In summing up the findings of their study, Andreou et al. (2008) write:

> The current study supports the idea that learning styles may be important factors for teachers to take into account when designing and delivering their programmes and providing guidance for students. This is especially true in a higher education system where all students, irrespective of age and gender, are being required to (a) take the initiative in learning, (b) move away from an overreliance on lecturers, (c) accept an active student-centred approach to learning as opposed to passive, and (d) understand that they should learn not just for the purposes of assessment but for their own intellectual growth, pleasure, and fulfillment. (p. 672)

Learning styles are of interest to the present study particularly because of the study's focus on meeting the individual needs of the learner. A common problem with ESL or EAP programs is that they tend to be based on the assumption that one size (or style) fits all. It is thus necessary first to establish that this assumption is not true and then to examine ways in which programs can be adapted to accommodate different learning styles so as to meet individual learners' needs more effectively. There are a variety of measures and instruments that can be used to determine an individual's learning style. Wyman (2001) has developed a Personal Learning Styles Inventory that can be used to determine the dominant sensory modality of the learner. A much earlier instrument, dating back to 1976, is the Edmonds Learning Style Identification Exercise (ELSIE), which gave rise to the Learning Style Profile (LSP) in 1989 (Ehrman, 1996). The Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire, introduced in 1987, and The Learning Channel Preference Checklist, introduced in 1990, are also in use (Ehrman). Such instruments or a variation of them may be used effectively in an ESL or EAP

program when students enter the program as a means of developing a student profile for each learner. This profile becomes part of that student's permanent record and can be accessed by instructors when developing individualized learning plans for the students in their class.

Language Learning Strategies

Several recent studies, cited by Hong-Nam and Leavell (2006), have investigated the relationship between personal language learning strategies and language proficiency. Hong-Nam and Leavell (2006) themselves conducted a study that is of particular interest to the present investigation since it involved ESL students, a majority of whom were of Asian origin, enrolled in an English Program as a prerequisite to entering university, a situation very similar to that of the ELP in the current study. Hong-Nam and Leavell employed Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), a highly reliable instrument for assessing the frequency of use of language learning strategies. SILL classifies language learning strategies into six categories: (a) memory strategies (for storage and retrieval of information), (b) cognitive strategies (for comprehension and production of language), (c) compensation strategies (for dealing with personal limitation in language learning), (d) metacognitive strategies (for the planning and monitoring personal learning), (e) affective strategies (for the control of emotions and motivation), and (f) social strategies (for cooperation with others in language learning). The two researchers found that overall the students in their study used metacognitive strategies and social strategies more than any other type of strategy for their ESL learning. Hong-Nam and Leavell speculate that this was attributable to the fact that the learners were in an intensive English program and were, therefore, more likely to have strong instrumental motivation than other ESL learners and thus take control of their own language learning process. Hong-Nam and Leavell cite

research that indicates that metacognitive awareness enhances academic performance. The use of social strategies indicates a preference for group learning. Affective strategies were among the least frequently used, as might be expected with Asian students, given that Oriental cultures discourage public displays of personal emotions. Contrary to expectation, however, memory strategies were also among the *least* frequently used. Memory strategies would be expected to be extremely popular with Asian students, given the emphasis on memorization in the educational system that prevails in most Oriental countries. Hong-Nam and Leavell also looked at the relationship between learning strategy use and language proficiency. They found that Intermediate learners (that is, learners with mid-level proficiency) used a wider range of strategies than Beginners and Advanced learners. They speculate that this is because high-proficiency learners, by virtue of their higher level of proficiency, do not need to use conscious learning strategies because their learning has become more instinctive and automatic and the learning strategies have become habitual, that is, a part of the way they function rather than a conscious strategy applied to completing a task or solving a problem. The study also uncovered patterns relating to gender, nationality, and other variables that are not relevant to the present investigation and will, therefore, not be discussed here. What is relevant are the implications that Hong-Nam and Leavell derive from their findings. The most important implication is that at the advanced level, ESL students have developed a high degree of autonomy and the teacher needs to recognize this and "step back and let the student lead the way in terms of how he or she approaches the language learning task" (p. 413). Thus, the teacher needs to assume the role of a facilitator rather than a mediator between the learner and the language. ESL instructors need to be aware of and sensitive to the learning strategies employed by their students and work with these strategies to meet individual needs.

Thus, in an ESP program, learning styles and strategies may vary with the level as well as the purpose or discipline of the program. Hence, programs for learners in different disciplines may emphasize different learning approaches most appropriate to the current status as well as the ultimate goals of the learners.

The Theoretical Underpinnings of Language Needs Assessment and Analysis

Needs identification and analysis are essential for the purposes of research and experimentation in developing theoretical approaches and practical methods for language teaching (Richterich, 1983). Carter and Nunan (2001) have written on the value of relating actual classroom procedures to the learners' needs in learning a new language. In order to set up an effective language teaching/learning program at a given time and in a given place, it is necessary to know what factors in that particular situation will have an impact on the program. One fundamental purpose of research and experimentation in the field of second- and/or foreign-language acquisition is to facilitate teaching and learning, and thus the task both during and after the process of analysis must be to determine what part the needs identification and analysis can play in the ongoing search for better teaching and better learning, and then to specify what forms the improvements will take.

Once language needs have been identified, meaningful teaching/learning objectives can be formulated. In order to specify meaningful objectives, the researcher must compile information on both the individuals or groups of individuals who are to learn the target language and the use that these learners are expected to make of this language when they have acquired it. This approach is based on the notion that language learners must be actively involved in their learning, and this kind of involvement can be achieved only if content, methods, and practices are consonant with the individual's personality, capabilities, and interests. Every ESL course, as Long (2005) suggests,

should be considered a course in "English for Specific Purposes," varying only in the degree to which the learners' needs can be specified.

Thus, it is essential in the first place to formulate meaningful objectives, taking into consideration the kinds of language resources that the language learners will need in practice when they use the target language to communicate in the various situations in which they will find themselves. In order to do this, it is necessary to acquire a better understanding of the abilities, resources, interests, and expectations of the groups of learners involved. Thus, identification of language needs is part of the learner-centered approach to language teaching. This means that curriculum planning must take into account not just the needs of the individual learner, but also the characteristics of the social group to which he/she belongs, the educational institutions providing the learning environment, and the social institutions that provide the resources.

The concept of language needs has not yet been clearly defined, and, consequently, its use in the literature is rather diffuse. In recent years, the concept of "need" has been expanded to cover a wide range of aspects of the personal and social development of the individual, including the development of study skills and of self-reliance as a learner (Trim, 1980). Needs, as Richterich (1983) puts it, are "things which make their appearance, change and go away, always different depending on the interaction between individuals and their environment and on their activities" (p. 4). Richterich further states that since needs are not ready-made things, it is difficult to analyze, describe, and define them. Thus, identifying needs through a systematic approach that is centered on the learners would necessarily involve constructing a learning project in conjunction with the learner and together finding the compromise by means of which he or she can institutionally and socially accomplish his or her goals. In

practice this will consist of collecting, processing, and applying a wide range of information related to the individual learner and his or her broader social context.

According to Richterich (1983), individuals who are learning a foreign/second language generally perceive their language needs within the framework of the following propositions:

- Learners form a concept (based on their personal characteristics, experiences, and knowledge) of (a) the language, (b) its use, (c) its acquisition, (d) how it is taught;
- This concept is the result of their interaction with the institutional environment or environments which provide them with information of all kinds about (a) the language, (b) its use, (c) its acquisition, and (d) how it is taught;
- Learners compare the concept they form with what they observe, discover, experience, and feel at the time when they are actually learning the language.

This means that language needs identification must offer learners and teachers methods and practices through which they can exploit, for educational purposes, the dual interaction between the individuals and their environment and between their projections into the future and their past and present experiences.

The results of the identification of needs will take the form of a certain amount of information collected at different levels and times. How much information is collected and the manner in which it is collected will depend, on the one hand, on the extent to which individuals and institutions feel motivated or compelled to take language needs into account, and, on the other, on the means and instruments available to the investigator. Thus, depending on the circumstances, the learners and the establishment will organize their own methods of identification on the basis of the information that they deem important. In some cases, a broad, general, overall inquiry will be sufficient; in

others, analysis, surveys, and detailed samplings will be necessary, the main points being (a) that learners and the institution become aware of certain facts and data involved in the learning/teaching of a second language, and (b) that this realization should lead to discussion, negotiation, and participation between the persons concerned with the aim of finding the compromises necessary for the carrying out of any training and without which satisfaction of individual and collective needs can only be illusory (Richterich & Chancerel, 1980).

According to Richterich and Chancerel (1980), the purpose of identifying the needs of learners who are learning a second and/or foreign language is threefold:

1. To show that analysis or identification of language needs ought to be an integral part of the organized language learning process;

2. To show that all parts of the system are interdependent: analysis of resources and motivations, definition of objectives and methods of assessment, choice of methodologies and teaching curricula; and

3. To suggest conceptual instruments for carrying out this identification.

The process of identifying language needs can be addressed to the following groups of people at different levels and for different purposes:

- the learners, to awaken their awareness;
- the teachers, to give them a better understanding of the make-up of a group of learners, so that they can adapt their teaching accordingly;
- the creators of teaching and learning materials, so that they can adapt the materials they create to the needs of specific categories of learners and include various means of identifying future needs;

- the educators and administrators in institutions of learning, to enable them to plan and adapt curricula and educational programs.

There are several types of information that can be collected in order to put together, jointly with the learners, an accurate description of their needs. Richterich and Chancerel (1980) present the following three categories:

1. Identification of the learners' needs by *the learners*, before and during the course, depending on: (a) their resources; (b) their objectives; (c) the methods of assessment; (d) the curriculum.

2. Identification of the learners' needs by *the teaching establishment*, before and during the course, depending on: (a) its resources; (b) its objectives; (c). its methods of assessment; (d) its curriculum.

3. Identification of the learners' needs by *the user-institution (i.e., any structurized social unit)*, before and during the course, depending on: (a) its resources; (b) its objectives; (c) its methods of assessment; (d) its curriculum.

Carkin (2005) has identified the following variables in the needs assessment of diverse learners: country of origin, cultural background, institution of learning, personal academic goals, ethical and moral values, materials development, text selection, learning goals and tasks, evaluation of language learners, and course program success.

Studies on Second Language Learners' Needs

Most studies in this area have attempted to identify the language needs of language learners for the purpose of improving English language programs and/or academic programs.

An EFL needs assessment: Chinese students at a Canadian university reports on the results of a study by Yilin Sun (1987) conducted among Chinese visiting scholars and

graduate students. It is considered to be the first attempt by a Chinese researcher to carry out a needs assessment among Chinese students in Canada. An interesting aspect that distinguishes this study from previous surveys is that its findings did lead to practical recommendations for skills and activities that should be emphasized in English language training programs in China in order to prepare Chinese scholars and students to function optimally in an English-speaking academic environment.

Ostler's (1980) study, "A survey of academic needs for advanced ESL," reveals the importance of assessing specific language needs in academic and social settings. The study was conducted at the American Language Institute, University of Southern California, and focused on students in its advanced ESL classes. The findings indicate that there are several areas that can be improved through curriculum development. In her article, Ostler presents an intriguing perspective; she states: "ESL programs at the university level should be designed to prepare international students to compete on an equal basis with American students." She claims further that "good ESL programs must be able to produce students who can use the same skills as their American counterparts" (p. 501).

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and for Specific (or Special) Purposes (ESP)

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) has risen to prominence in the past three decades as "a major force in English language teaching and research around the world … [and] is now situated at the front line of both theory development and innovative practice in teaching English as a second/other language" (Hyland, 2006, p. 1). Nevertheless, it is still a somewhat controversial field, with considerable debate about how specific or general EAP instruction should be. EAP has traditionally focused on the four core activities:

1. listening to lectures, talks, and presentations

2. participating in supervisions, seminars, and tutorials

3. reading textbooks, articles, case studies, etc.

4. writing essays, examination answers, dissertations, lab reports, etc. (Hyland).

However, it has become apparent in recent years that the differences between various academic disciplines may be greater than the similarities, and the focus is now turning to teaching "skills and language which are [specifically] related to the demands of a particular discipline or department" (Hyland, p. 9).

To deal with this issue, a recent trend in ESL programs at North American colleges and universities is the move towards offering specialized ESL instruction not only in order to cater to specific learner needs within specific academic disciplines, but also to accommodate funding cutbacks and streamline the delivery of ESL instruction. Kasper (1998) has explored two ways of incorporating EAP instruction into university programs: (a) *interdisciplinary collaboration,* and (b) *discipline-specific ESL courses.*

In interdisciplinary collaboration, an ESL course offered at a college or university is paired with a mainstream academic course such that the activities and curriculum of the ESL course are coordinated with the topics being covered in the mainstream course. Kasper's considerable research (cited in Kasper, 1998) has shown that not only do such course pairings increase L2 learners' scores on measures of reading and writing proficiency in English, but the L2 learners in question perform on par with the native-English-speaking counterparts in terms of the mainstream course content. A further finding is that the effect is sustained throughout the semester so that the L2 learners had a lower dropout rate in the mainstream course than the university average. These findings have led Kasper to conclude that "[i]nterdisciplinary collaborations can significantly

improve both content area learning and English language proficiency" (p. 149). Kasper attributes these effects to the fact that pairing academic courses with ESL courses gives the ESL students a chance to review the material from their mainstream course in the safe and nonthreatening environment of the ESL classroom and the dual exposure to the material in two essentially different instructional settings has the effect of consolidating the learning. Kasper admits that such programs are not easy to coordinate, and the ESL instructor must already have or be willing to develop some expertise in the content area of the mainstream course in order to integrate it effectively into his or her ESL course curriculum. There are also logistical and administrative problems, such as scheduling the two courses to line up with each other, and making sure that the number of ESL students registered for the mainstream course is high enough to warrant offering a "sister" ESL course to accompany it.

A less expensive and effort-demanding solution is discipline-specific ESL courses. In such courses, the ESL instruction is presented within the framework of some academic discipline, such as psychology, for example. Thus, the reading, listening, writing, and speaking materials are drawn from some mainstream academic course without the additional requirement of concurrent registration in both the ESL course and the mainstream course. Kasper (1998) obtained similar results to those obtained with course pairing. In fact, she found that those who had received discipline-based instruction alone were able to complete their ESL requirements and enter the mainstream program more quickly than any other students in the university's ESL program. In addition, they earned higher scores in mainstream English courses than other ESL students who had completed their ESL requirement, but without discipline-based instruction. Finally, they had a higher graduation rate than other ESL students at the university who had

successfully entered the mainstream. Kasper attributes this kind of success to the fact that comprehension of academic texts requires a more advanced level of language processing than the comprehension of literary or other texts. The meaning construction and metacognition required in this advanced reading process encourage the use of more efficient comprehension strategies and result in higher levels of linguistic proficiency.

Kasper (1998) offers the following guidelines for setting up a discipline-based ESL instruction program:

1. Choose a subject area that is of interest to both you and your students.
2. Ask students which subject(s) they plan to major in and develop the course to meet both [the] students' interests and their needs.
3. Choose discipline-based materials that are challenging, but not frustrating (that is, materials that do not overwhelm the learners).
4. Use a variety of textual material to expose students to different styles of writing and vocabulary. Include academic textbook chapters, magazine and journal articles, and books. Have students read topical novels or short stories.
5. Develop oral and written activities which integrate and reinforce the four basic language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
6. Vary activity to maintain interest, and include audiovisuals whenever possible.
7. Help to consolidate content subject matter and vocabulary by providing visual illustration through the use of topical videos.
8. Allow course content to be flexible and modify it from semester to semester as necessary to accommodate the needs of students. (pp. 153-54)

Kasper further notes that an EAP program cannot be complete without instruction in how to conduct oneself in a North American classroom. Since many students in the program will have come from a culture in which students are expected to adopt a passive role in their learning, a North American EAP program needs to emphasize student participation in class and provide practice in asking questions in the lecture-style format.

The academic requirements of language use are complex and the problem of teaching EAP is made more difficult by the fact that each academic discipline has its own unique vocabulary, its own special form of discourse, and its own standards. Molle and Prior (2008) have explored the complexities of developing an EAP writing curriculum based on the currently popular *genre theory*. Abasi and Akbari (2008) have examined the problem of "patchwriting" (a euphemism for "plagiarism") among ESL writers in university courses. Hancioglu, Neufeld, and Eldridge (2008) have looked into the problems associated with teaching vocabulary in an EAP setting.

Teaching ESP and EAP places unusual demands on the ESL instructor, especially since the instructor cannot be an expert in every academic or professional discipline. Wu and Badger (2009) have explored strategies that instructors can use in dealing with their lack of sufficient knowledge of the subject matter they are covering in their ESP or EAP classroom.

Structural Framework for the Present Study

This survey of the research and theoretical work done in the field over the past several decades provides a useful background for the current project, covering theories of second language acquisition, theoretical approaches to explaining second language learning, language proficiency, learners' beliefs about learning a second language, the role of motivation in language acquisition, types of language learners, the theory behind

the concept of identifying and analyzing language needs, and studies done to determine language needs. However, an overarching framework is required to situate all these various elements in a meaningful relationship to each other and to the "whole," that is, to the overall process of second language learning as it applies to those for whom proficiency in English is a necessity, given their choice to pursue higher education in North America. Such a framework can be found in the concept of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Given that ESL learners whose ultimate goal in acquiring English proficiency is a degree from a North American university will be using their English in a variety of different domains and academic disciplines, the present study will seek to interpret its findings in the light of the principles and theoretical assumptions of ESP within the ambit of English for Academic Purposes (EAP). Within this framework, the fundamental motivation of the learners is assumed to be instrumental. The learning strategies used by these learners will, naturally, be related to the practical goals they seek to achieve. Teaching methods in the classroom will need to take into account the specific purposes for which the learners are studying English and will thus be a balanced combination of form-focused instruction and content-focus instruction, given that accuracy of form is as important as accuracy of content in academic settings. Above all, the ESP framework will make it possible for ESL programs to focus on meeting the individual needs of its students.

The next chapter will detail the research methodologies used to conduct the study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies were used in this research project. Creswell (2005) comments on the appropriateness of the mixed method for doing research in the field of education as follows: "With qualitative research recognized and appreciated by more and more educators, and with quantitative research long established as an approach, mixed methods research has become popular as the newest approach to 'mix' quantitative and qualitative method" (p. 509). Brew and Hunter (1989) define a mixed-method research design as a "procedure for collecting, analyzing, and 'mixing' both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study to understand a research problem." They also consider mixed-method research to be a "legitimate inquiry approach" (p. 28). While both quantitative and qualitative methods are used in the current study, the primary emphasis is on the *qualitative* approach, given that the purpose of the study is to provide a *descriptive* account of the perceptions that ESL learners have of the ESL instruction they receive in intensive English programs in preparation for university studies in English and to determine if these perceptions are backed up by quantitative data. As Corti and Thompson (2004) have noted, "The first use of qualitative data is descriptive, … encompassing both the contemporary and historical attitudes and behavior of individuals, groups and organizations, or societies" (p. 331).

Qualitative Methodology Framework

Among the dozens of frameworks or approaches to doing qualitative research that exist and are in common use, Creswell (2007) identifies five that are the most basic: (a) Narrative Research, (b) Phenomenology, (c) Grounded Theory, (d) Ethnography, and (e) Case Study. The choice of approach or framework is generally determined by the

discipline in which the research is being conducted and the underlying objectives of the research project.

For the purposes of the present study, the *narrative* approach was deemed particularly suitable since it originated in the disciplines of education, sociology, sociolinguistics, literature, history, and anthropology (Creswell, 2007). According to Creswell (2007), the narrative procedure involves gathering data by collecting the stories of individuals, reporting on these experiences, and interpreting their meaning within a certain theoretical framework. The narrative approach comes in a variety of forms. The most suitable form for the present study is *analysis of narratives*, which uses "paradigm thinking to create descriptions of themes that hold across stories or taxonomies of types of stories" (Creswell, 2007, p. 54). Thus, interpretation of individuals' "stories" forms an essential part of the narrative framework (Patton, 2002). The narrative procedure involves the following steps (adapted from Creswell, 2007, pp. 55-56):

1. Selecting a limited number of individuals whose stories or life experiences have something worthwhile to say about the topic under investigation.
2. Gathering their stories in several different formats, such as interviews, journals or diaries, field notes of observations, letters, documents, memos, etc.
3. Recording details about the context of the stories, particularly in terms of the individuals' personal goals, dreams, aspirations, home life, culture, life setting (time and place), etc.
4. Analyzing the stories with the purpose of "restorying" them into a meaningful framework, often involving a chronological sequence. The narrative approach is based on the understanding that stories have a linear flow of time, with a past, present and future and a causal connection between them. Some theorists speak of

a *three-dimensional narrative inquiry space*, consisting of: (1) the *interactional* dimension (personal and social relationships); (2) the *temporal* dimension (past, present, and future); (3) the *situational* dimension (the physical environment of the individual's life).

5. Interpreting the themes that emerge from the analysis so as to arrive at the meaning of the story. In the postmodern tradition, this task of interpretation may take the form of deconstruction of the stories, that is, "an unmaking of them by such analytic strategies as exposing dichotomies, examining silences, and attending to disruptions and contractions" (Creswell, 2007, p. 56).

The emphasis on chronological sequence and causality is particularly pertinent to the present study, since second language learning is a developmental process with a definite chronological sequence. Furthermore, the participants in the study are primarily concerned with the future and with the ways in which their present situation as second language learners will affect their future as students in an English-speaking academic environment.

While the narrative approach forms the core of the methodological framework of the present study, elements from the other approaches are also present. Since second language learning and academic aspirations are closely connected with the individual's psychological state and his or her social and cultural relations, the approach used in the design of this research project includes methodological strategies derived from phenomenology and ethnography.

It is also important to note that the narrative approach has recently begun to be applied effectively to the study of organizations (Patton, 2002). This application is particularly relevant to the present study, as the study's focus is primarily on the

effectiveness of the ELP and the organizational structure under which it is run. In this approach, the students' stories are bound up inextricably with the story of the program and the institution in which they are members. The narrative of the former cannot be told and understood completely without reference to the narrative of the latter.

Theoretical and Philosophical Underpinnings of the Qualitative Orientation to Research

Several theoretical and philosophical assumptions underlie the methods of qualitative research and inform the researcher as he or she goes about conducting his or her investigation. It is important to make these assumptions explicit in order to highlight how they shaped the researcher's attitude to the task and the manner in which the research was conducted, as well as to indicate their influence on the outcome of the study.

1. *Phenomenology*: This is a branch of philosophy that maintains that lived experience is the basis upon which we construct our worldviews. Lived experiences are also shared experiences in that they have something in common—a structure and an essence that can be narrated. An important part of phenomenology is *hermeneutics*, the interpretation of life's "texts." As applied to qualitative research, the phenomenological understanding of life suggests that the phenomenon under investigation must be studied in terms of how it is experienced by those who are affected by it and what meaning it has for them. Relying on his or her intuition, imagination, and universal structures, and setting aside his or her preconceptions, the researcher takes on the role of interpreter, mediating between different meanings and reflecting on what constitutes the essence of a given lived experience (Creswell, 2008, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Patton 2002).

2. *Postmodernism*: Postmodernism is not a single philosophy but a cluster of closely related ideas that share a commitment to pluralism and a suspicion of rationality, positivism, dogmatism, "meta-narratives," and the efficacy of science in dealing with human problems. Postmodernism values multiple perspectives and gives equal weight to the view of all classes, races, genders, and other groups. Meta-narratives are universal, overarching explanations for the way things are; they tend to marginalize those who do not belong in that explanatory scheme or who have different views. In some of its forms, postmodernism also involves linguistic analysis of texts and uses a method of "deconstruction" to take the text apart as a way of revealing hidden elements that contribute to domination and marginalization. Postmodernist ideas have been applied widely to qualitative research, particularly in the form of Critical Theory (Creswell, 2007). The postmodern emphasis on inclusiveness and its criticism of dominance and marginalization is present at a very fundamental level in the methods of qualitative research, which values the expression of multiple points of view and seeks to understand meanings rather than impose them. However, postmodernism is not without its critics in the area of qualitative research because of its distrust of method and methodology and its critique of conventional modes of linguistic representation and its deconstruction of language (Delamont, 2004; Seale, Gabo, Gubrium, & Silverman, 2004).

3. *Constructivism*: Constructivism is the view that humans construct their reality individually and subjectively through social interaction with other individuals and through historical, cultural, and other norms. Thus, there is no one single reality or even a few, but a great multiplicity of realities. Like phenomenology, constructivism emphasizes the subjective nature of human experience. As applied to qualitative research, this view suggests that the researcher should be less interested in broad, overarching theories and

more interested in the processes by which people construct their realities. The researcher realizes that his or her own reality is a construct which influences how he or she interprets his or her observations of the phenomenon under investigation. The qualitative researcher seeks to make sense of, or "interpret," the meanings that others have constructed from themselves and how these meanings affect their behaviour (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002).

4. *Holism*: The holistic approach is predicated on the idea that the whole is not merely the sum total of it parts and that individual phenomena must be studied in their larger context as part of a whole community or culture or human experience. A basic assumption of holism is that for any phenomenon within a given system, there are "complex interdependencies and system dynamics that cannot meaningfully be reduced to a few discrete variables and linear, cause-effect relationships: (Patton, 2002, p. 41). The *holistic* approach is contrasted with the *analytic* approach, which seeks to understand phenomena by taking them apart and studying each piece separately. The qualitative emphasis on holism means that the researcher has to gather data on a number of aspects that might not at first glance be related directly to the topic under investigation (Patton, 2002). It does not mean that the researcher never engages in component analysis, but rather, that he or she "works back and forth between parts and wholes, separate variables and complex, interwoven constellations of variables in a sorting-out then putting-back-together process" (Patton, 2002, p. 67). A holistic understanding is particularly important in doing research in the field of education, since learning (and second language learning in particular) is a multidimensional process that involves the learner's social and cultural background and environment, his or her psychological status, and a number of other factors.

5. *Systems Theory*: Systems Theory is related closely to holism and is in fact an attempt to apply the principle of holism to understanding how systems work. According to the theory, a system as a whole cannot be understood merely by examining its individual parts. In a properly functioning system, the parts have to interact with each other, and this interaction is lost when the parts are taken apart for analysis. In complex systems, even minor structural changes in one part have the power to trigger functional changes throughout the system. Thus, the theory focuses on function rather than structure (Patton, 2002). A researcher might, of course, examine the structure of a given system, but only to discover how the structure affects the overall functioning of the system. In the context of doing research in second language learning and intensive English programs, such as the ELP, a systems approach would consider not just the students or the teachers, but the entire program, including the administrators and the interactions between and among all three groups of people involved in the system.

6. *Complexity Theory* and *Chaos Theory*: Complexity Theory is one of the underlying principles of Systems Theory. It is based on the idea that in complex systems minor events and changes at one level of organization may have major consequences at another, higher level of organization. That is, something *quantitatively* small may have an effect that is *qualitatively* large. Thus, qualitative importance is not necessarily determined by quantitatively measured size (Patton, 2002). Furthermore, the introduction of the researcher into the system for investigative purposes can and may alter the system, perhaps even permanently (Patton, 2002). Closely related to Complexity Theory, Chaos Theory emphasizes the idea that order is not the only value to be striven for, and that randomness and disorder can be as meaningful as order in "identifying patterns in the noise of human complexity" (Patton, 2002, p. 126). Chaos Theory is related to Systems

Theory through the idea that systems, especially human systems, are dynamic rather than static, and are, therefore, in a state of constant flux. The qualitative researcher needs to be careful not to impose a fixed structure upon a constantly changing phenomenon (Patton, 2002). Chaotic movement may be part of the way the system operates, and bringing order to the "chaos" of the data that is collected may obscure this fact. These insights are particularly pertinent to second language learning, which is more often than not a random process that does not proceed in a linear fashion. Thus, evaluating the effectiveness of a structured English program may involve something more than merely looking at progress as determined by pre- and post-test scores.

Methodology of Interviewing

Given the phenomenological framework within which qualitative research is broadly conceived, this study chose to adopt a modified version of the technique of *phenomenological interviewing* (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Seidman, 2006). In addition, this approach to interviewing fits well with the *narrative methodology* used in this study and with the narrative emphasis on past, present, and future discussed earlier.

The overall process of phenomenological interviewing consists of three phases: (a) *phenomenological inquiry,* (b) *phenomenological reduction,* and (c) *structural synthesis* (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

The first phase, phenomenological inquiry, is concerned with data gathering through the interview process. Fundamental to the theory underpinning this method is the idea that the data collected during the in-depth interview is a reflection of a reality that is co-constructed by the interviewer and the interviewee, and that "interviews are *inherently interactional events*, that both speakers mutually monitor each other's talk (and gestures), that the talk is *locally and collaboratively produced*" (Rapley, 2004, p. 16; emphasis in

original). Consequently, before conducting the interviews, the investigator prepares himself or herself for the interviewing process by creating a written description of his or her own past experience in relation to the topic under investigation so as to make a clear distinction between the information provided by the interviewee and his or her own unconscious presuppositions. This preparatory process is termed *epoche* (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Patton, 2002). In its original form, phenomenological inquiry consists of a series of three interviews, as follows:

1. The first interview attempts to establish a background or context for the narrative or "story" of the participant. The focus is on the participant's past experience or life history. The participants are free to create their own narrative as a means of defining themselves.
2. The second interview focuses on the participant's present experience in relation to the issue being investigated. In the context of research in the field of education, student participants are encouraged to talk about their relationships with their fellow students, their teachers, the school administrators, their parents, and the community at large. Again, the focus is on telling stories about what they experience both in school and outside of school in terms of their learning and how it impacts their present life.
3. In the third interview, the participants are asked to reflect on what their present experience means to them. Attention often turns to the future in this interview as participants reflect on where their present activities will lead them. This interview builds upon what has been achieved in the first two interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Seidman 2006).

Since it was not logistically possible to have three separate interviews in the current study given the time constraints, the three-interview structure was collapsed into one single interview, but with the three distinct focuses on the past, present, and future in separate stages in the one interview. The student interview questions were so constructed as to focus specifically on these three aspects of the students' experience.

In the second phase, *phenomenological reduction*, the investigator isolates the core elements of the phenomenon under investigation and clusters the data around clearly identifiable themes that reflect the essence of the experience (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). This process often begins some time before the first interview is actually conducted. The investigator prepares himself or herself mentally by collecting and going through literature on the topic. From this review of the literature analytic themes sometimes emerge that serve not only as a basis for data analysis in the second phase but also for interview questions and discussion. Thus, the process of phenomenological reduction can actually begin during the inquiry (interview) phase (Rapley, 2004).

In the *structural synthesis* phase, the investigator considers all possible perspectives on the themes and core elements derived from phenomenological reduction and finally prepares "a description of the essence of the phenomenon and its deep structure" (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 105). In the writing of the final report, each individual account or narrative from each interview becomes part of a collective account of the overall phenomenon (Rapley, 2004).

The principles upon which phenomenological interviewing is based imply that a certain interviewing technique and specific interviewing skills are needed. These might be summarized from the detailed discussion by Seidman (2006) and Rapley (2004) as follows:

1. Active Listening: The in-depth interviewer listens on three levels: (a) listening for and absorbing the content; (b) listening for the participant's "inner voice," that is, listening "between the lines" for what is left unsaid but is nevertheless there; (c) being sensitive to paralinguistic signals that the participant might be sending as to his or her physical, mental, and emotional state—this helps the interviewer to decide how to move the interview forward or whether to end the interview before it is completed.
2. Following Up: The in-depth interviewer needs to know when to follow up appropriately on comments made by the participant. Active listening implies active follow-up. This may involve: (a) asking for clarification; (b) probing gently for more information. The in-depth interviewer develops the skill of following up without interrupting the participant.
3. Asking Questions Appropriately: The in-depth interviewer: (a) avoids leading questions, that is, questions that influence the participant to respond in a certain way; (b) asks open-ended questions.
4. Using Role-Playing: The in-depth interviewer may need to get a participant to imagine that he or she is talking to another person, such as a close family member or friend. This is done to get the participant to speak in a more authentic voice, that is, to say what he or she really feels rather than what he or she thinks the investigator wants to hear.
5. Using Storytelling: The in-depth interviewer encourages the participant to talk about his or her experience in the form of a story.
6. Using Reconstruction of Past Experiences: The in-depth interviewer avoids appealing to the participant's memory, which may not always be reliable.

Instead, the interviewer encourages the participant to reconstruct what happened in the past from the perspective of the present situation.

7. Focusing on the Topic and Being Concrete: The in-depth interviewer develops the skill to keep the participant from wandering away from the issue being investigated without making the interaction appear to be a power struggle. One way to achieve this is to encourage the participant to offer concrete details.
8. Controlling Feedback: The in-depth interviewer is careful not to provide reinforcing feedback either verbally or nonverbally by, for example, saying "Yes," or "OK," or nodding. The interview limits feedback to: (a) reflecting the content of a comment, by repeating it (playing it back to the participant); (b) reflecting the participant's emotional state but putting it into words as a form of clarification.
9. Developing Rapport with the Interviewee: The in-depth interviewer does this by engaging in a certain amount of self-disclosure whenever and wherever appropriate so as to develop a sense of complementary reciprocity between himself or herself and the interviewee. This often opens up an opportunity for "hidden" or "silenced" voices to speak.
10. Checking One's Own Understanding: The in-depth interviewer does this by: (a) paraphrasing what the participant has said; (b) summarizing what the participant has said. If the interviewer's version is not quite right, the participant will correct it by restating what he or she said originally.

The investigator was conscious of and tried to follow these techniques when conducting the interviews for the present study. They were considered an essential part of the

research methodology and contributed to the overall effectiveness of the qualitative approach to investigating the topic.

Research Design

Four mixed-method designs are generally recognized: (a) The Triangulation Design, (b) The Embedded Design, (c) The Explanatory Design, and (d) the Exploratory Design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The Triangulation Design was chosen as the most suitable design for the current study. In the triangulation procedure, multiple sources, methods, and theories of varying types are used to provide corroborating evidence or uncover facts. This typically involves evidence from different types of sources in the search for new themes or perspectives (Creswell, 1998; Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & Steinmetz, 1991; Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1980, 1990). According to Creswell (2005), the purpose of the triangulation design is to "simultaneously collect both quantitative and qualitative data, merge the data, and use the results to understand a research problem" (p. 514). Triangulation is used when a researcher is looking for complementary data that will present different views of the same topic, or is interested in comparing and contrasting quantitative results with qualitative findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). There are four models of triangulation: (a) the *convergence* model, (b) the *data transformation* model, (c) the *validating quantitative data* model, and (d) the *multilevel* model (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). For the purposes of the present study, the convergence model, which is sometimes also referred to as "*concurrent triangulation*" (Creswell, 2008), was selected. In this model, the quantitative and qualitative data are collected and analyzed separately and the results from each type of analysis are then merged through a process of

comparing and contrasting to see if they support similar conclusions or not. The investigator looks for whether the qualitative and quantitative data converge, diverge, or exhibit a combination of convergence and divergence. (Creswell, 2008; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The convergence model is represented in Figure 4.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study investigated the language needs of English as a Second Language (ESL) learners who attended the English Language Program (ELP) at a university in Ontario. The study addressed the following questions:

1. What specific content (subject matter) do international students think they need to learn in order to succeed academically in an English language program in Canada?
2. What specific content do international students think they need to learn in order to succeed socially in an English-speaking environment?
3. Overall, what language skills do international students see as the most important?
4. What specific language skills do international students think they need to have in order to succeed academically in an English language program in Canada?
5. What specific language skills do international students think they need to have in order to succeed socially in an English-speaking environment?
6. What factors, in particular do international students think prevent them from communicating effectively in academic and social settings in Canada?
7. Are there significant differences in the needs of individuals who are from the *same* ethnic and linguistic backgrounds?
8. Are there significant differences in the needs of individuals who are from *different* ethnic and linguistic backgrounds?

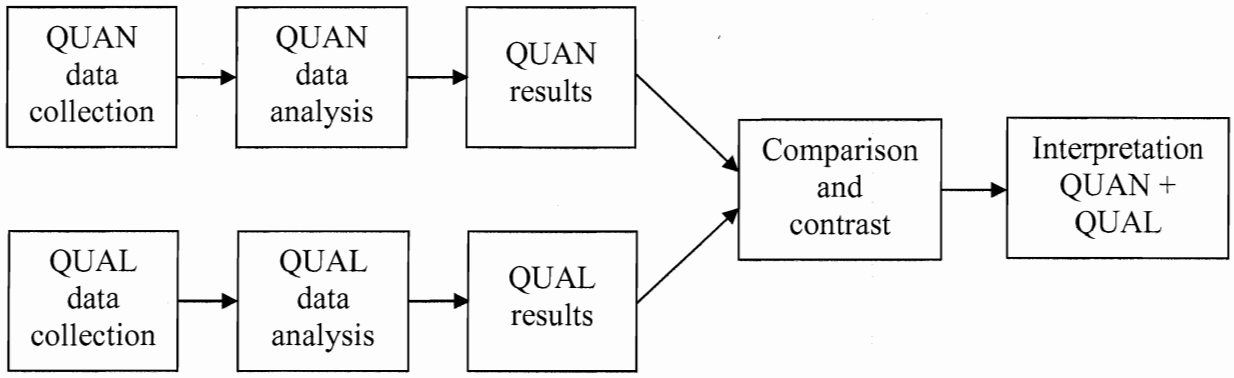

Figure 4. The convergence model of triangulation.

Note. From *Designing and conducting mixed method research,* (p. 63), by J. W. Creswell and V. L. Plano Clark, 2007. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Copyright 2007 by Sage. Adapted with permission.

9. What measurable changes in language proficiency occur during the students' study of English in the ESL program?

Practical Assumptions

1. The specific language needs of ESL students can be identified.
2. The similarities and differences between the language needs of various groups of learners can be identified and categorized.
3. The identification of language needs of language learners is essential to the creation of effective second-language training programs and the proper delivery of second-language instruction.

Selection of Participants

This study involved two groups of participants. The first group consisted of 17 international students (ESL students of different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds) who were enrolled in the English Language Program (ELP) over two terms. The researcher called for volunteers to participate in the study, the invitation being extended only to students in Levels 3, 4, and 5 (Intermediate to Advanced) in the ELP. The second group consisted of 6 ELP instructors (native English speakers and non-native English speakers) who were teaching Levels 3, 4, and 5 in the same term. Pseudonyms have been used to preserve the anonymity of individual instructors. In addition, an administrator agreed to be interviewed for the study.

Procedure

Three data collecting methods were used in conducting this study: (a) extraction of scores from a prior proficiency test taken by students in the ELP, (b) the questionnaire, and (c) individual interviews with participants.

The Proficiency Test

The proficiency test involved in this study is the International Placement Test (IPT), designed for this purpose by faculty members of the university's Applied Linguistics department. The test consists of 4 sections, as follows:

1. Structure of Written English
2. Structure of Oral English
3. Reading Comprehension
4. Aural Comprehension

There are 35 test questions in each section. The test takers are given 20 minutes to complete the Structure of Written English section and 50 minutes to complete the Reading Comprehension section. Test takers are required to listen to a CD recording for the Oral English and Aural Comprehension sections; however, the CD recording has not been yet made, and the script is, therefore, usually read aloud by the teacher in place of the recording. In addition, there is no specific time-limit set for these two sections. All the questions on the IPT are of the multiple-choice variety.

The IPT is used to determine: (a) whether the language skills and performance of the ESL students who attend the ELP conform to internationally accepted standards, (b) whether a given student's language proficiency has improved after having completed the curriculum for a given level of the ELP, and (c) whether the language needs of the ESL students are being met by the teachers and administrators. This test serves as a means by which teachers and administrators can gauge the strengths and weaknesses of their students and adapt their teaching methods, programs, and curricula accordingly. The proficiency test was designed to be in keeping with the theoretical considerations relating to language proficiency that were discussed earlier in this dissertation. ELP students take

the proficiency test twice, once on entering a level and again on exiting the level, with the same test serving as both the entrance (preinstruction) test and the exit (postinstruction) test. In this study, the students' performances on the preinstruction test and the postinstruction test were compared to determine the degree of increase in proficiency that had occurred in the students' English skills over the time they had received instruction in that level. This increase in proficiency was then used as a measure to determine the efficiency of the program as a whole.

The Questionnaires

Richterich and Chancerel (1980) note that questionnaires must be designed so as to achieve two objectives:

> (1) the questions must induce the person being questioned to express an opinion or state a fact which it is important to know; (2) the questions must be related to the person's circumstances so that he or she shall give the information in his or her possession as precisely as possible. (p. 59)

To this end, the questionnaires developed for this study consisted of both closed- and open-ended questions. Gass and Mackey (2007) note that using open-ended questions allows the respondents to answer in any manner they see fit. This gives each respondent the opportunity to express his or her thoughts and ideas in his or her own manner. Potentially, open-ended questions result in less predictable but more insightful data. The use of closed questions, on the other hand, elicits information that can be easily quantified and analyzed, and it involves uniformity of measurement and greater reliability in terms of the data obtained. Closed-ended questions are useful in focusing on concepts and themes that have emerged as important in a prior qualitative survey. Two separate questionnaires were used in this study, one for the students, the other for the instructors.

The Student Questionnaire

The purpose of the student questionnaire was to identify the students' perceptions of their own language skills and to give them an opportunity to share their opinions and experiences in learning and using English both inside and outside the classroom. The questionnaire was also used to obtain information about the students' demographic identity and background, the ways in which they intend to use the target language (English), the language skills they expect to develop, and the possible steps they expect to take to meet their goals. A pilot questionnaire was run to check for face and content validity and the necessary adjustments were made in the final questionnaire. A copy of the questionnaire is provided in Appendix A.

The Instructor Questionnaire

The instructor questionnaire was shorter than the student questionnaire and contained no open-ended questions, since these were to be addressed in the interviews. The purpose of this questionnaire was primarily to gather background information about the instructors as it pertained to their teaching as well as to determine their general attitudes to the language learning and language teaching process as a preparation for the interviews. A copy of this questionnaire is provided in Appendix B.

The Interviews

The interview technique was selected for this study because it was believed to be a purposeful and direct method of gathering information through conversation (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Gass and Mackey (2007) note that the advantage of conducting an interview is that it provides researchers with unscripted, conversational data. The 17 ELP students, 6 ELP instructors, and one ELP administrator were interviewed individually by the investigator in regard to various aspects of the ELP program and their perceptions of

its effectiveness in preparing ESL students to pursue higher education successfully in Canadian colleges and universities.

The Student Interviews

The purpose of the student interviews was to expand on the data gathered through the questionnaire. The students were encouraged to speak freely on their experiences in the ELP as well as their own experiences with learning and using English outside the program. The investigator's aim was to draw the students out on the strengths and weaknesses of the ELP program and on the extent to which the program was helping them to achieve their own personal goals and aspirations as students in Canada. A set of 12 questions was prepared, but follow-up questions were also asked when appropriate. A copy of questions is provided in Appendix C.

The Instructor Interviews

The purpose of the instructor interviews was to get the instructors' perspective on the language teaching/learning process. During the interviews, the investigator encouraged the ELP instructors to reflect on their teaching in terms of both the positive aspects of their teaching experience and the difficulties they encounter in the process. A set of five questions was prepared, but follow-up questions were also asked whenever appropriate and additional lines of inquiry were pursued at the researcher's discretion to clarify a given response or obtain further information relevant to the goals of the project. A copy of the five interview questions is provided in Appendix D.

The Administrator Interview

The purpose of the administrator interview was to gain insight into the challenges faced by administrators in general in creating, planning, and running language training

programs such as the ELP. A set of 12 questions was prepared for the interview. A copy of these questions is provided in Appendix E.

Data Collection

The data collecting proceeded in three phases and involved a combination of various methods:

1. Extraction of proficiency test scores from ELP records,
2. Data collection from student using the questionnaire (1 hour) followed by individual interviews (30 minutes),
3. Data collection from ESL instructors by means of a brief questionnaire and individual interviews (1 hour).

Phase I

In the first phase, the researcher extracted from the ELP records the entrance (preinstruction) and exit (postinstruction) scores on the proficiency test that each of the participants had taken upon entering and exiting their level. The proficiency test used routinely for this purpose is the International Placement Test (IPT), as described above. It is given to determine whether the students' language proficiency has improved sufficiently for them to be able to go on to the next level after having completed a given level of instruction within the 6-level system of the ELP. In this study, however, the objective in comparing the two scores was to determine the effectiveness of the language instruction that each participant had received in his or her respective level. The participants were not directly involved in this phase of data collection.

Phase II

In the second phase of data collection, the teacher and student participants filled out a questionnaire. Since the questionnaire was designed to feature both closed- and

open-ended questions, the data in this component of the study were collected by both quantitative and qualitative means, with both predetermined options to choose from as well as space for short written answers. Following the completion of the questionnaire, individual interviews were conducted with each of the participants who had filled out the questionnaire for the purpose of clarifying unclear responses to the open-ended questions and gathering additional information on language needs and related issues.

Phase III

In the third phase, individual interviews were conducted with instructors who taught Levels 3, 4, and 5 in the ELP. A brief questionnaire was administered to the instructors before the interview to collect demographic data relating to age, gender, experience, first language, and personal background. All the interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants using standard audio recording equipment. The researcher took notes during the interviews to record important points made by the interviewees. Also included in this group was an administrator in the ELP. During the interview, the administrator was asked a different set of questions from the one used for the instructors. The questions directed at the administrator pertained more broadly to the ELP, focusing on the technicalities of running of the program and policies involved in determining the form and features of the curriculum (understood in its broadest sense).

Data Analysis

As part of the triangulation design analysis, (a) a t test was performed to compare the means of the preinstruction and postinstruction test scores; (b) questionnaire data for teachers and students were examined for matches and mismatches; (c) the interview recordings were transcribed and a content analysis was performed on the transcripts in order to identify themes, commonalities, and differences among the teachers' responses,

as well as to look for new themes or variables suggested by the data; and (d) the results of the statistical analysis were compared with the qualitative data to account for any discrepancies in the quantitative data. Unfortunately, in order to protect confidentiality, the transcripts could not be included.

In addition, each of the transcripts was read independently by three readers, who picked out themes and made comments about the contents of the interviews or noted down their impressions of the interviewees. Any disagreements or differences of opinion among the three were discussed by the three and noted down.

In adopting a triangular design analysis for this study, it was expected that this mixed-method approach would facilitate (a) comparing the results of both the quantitative and qualitative analyses to determine if the two sets of data yielded similar or divergent results, (b) combining the quantitative and qualitative data to arrive at new variables or new themes that could possibly be explored in the future, and (c) providing a suitable framework within which to interpret the statistical findings (Creswell, 2005).

Pilot Study

The pilot study was used to establish the validity of the content of the research materials and to ensure that the participants would be able to complete the questionnaire and the individual interview without any undue difficulty, such as that resulting from poorly worded or ambiguous questions. Creswell (2005) defines a pilot test of a questionnaire or interview survey is "a procedure in which a researcher makes changes in an instrument based on feedback from a small number of individuals who complete and evaluate the instrument" (p. 595). In this study, minor adjustments were made to the questionnaires and interview questions following reviews by three readers who are experts in the area. Each reader provided detailed comments and feedback on the

questionnaires and interview questions, and the researcher made the necessary adjustments to reflect those concerns.

Member Checking

Accuracy in data collection was achieved through the member-checking procedure, which is defined as "a qualitative process during which the researcher asks one or more participants in the study to check the accuracy of the account" (Creswell, 2005, p.594), or "the process of having research participants judge the accuracy and completeness of statements made in the researcher's report" (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003, p. 629). After all the participants had been interviewed by the researcher (the interviews were recorded using standard audio recording equipment), the individual interviews were then transcribed by the researcher, and each interview transcript was sent back to the respective interviewee for him or her to review and reflect on, and to give approval on the overall accuracy of the transcript. The interviewees were also invited to make any changes that they felt were appropriate. This gave them an opportunity to recall new facts, have new perceptions of their responses, and add and delete information where they felt it was needed to ensure that the information they provided was accurately and completely recorded and that their opinions were correctly represented.

Data Recording

All the interviews were recorded on audiotape using standard audio recording equipment.

Confidentiality and Consent

Participants were asked to sign a consent form, which informed them of the procedures to be followed in participating in this study. The consent form, which was attached to the questionnaire, was the only document that contained the participant's

name. Once the questionnaires were handed in by the participants, the researcher detached the consent form from the questionnaire and the two were stored separately, in a locked filing cabinet, which was accessible only to the researcher.

Ethical Considerations

Participation in this study was entirely voluntary and interviews were recorded only with the consent of the interviewees. In addition, participants were informed that they were free to opt out of any aspects of the research that they felt uncomfortable with, and that they could withdraw from the study at any time or decline to answer any questions they did not wish to answer during the data collection process. The proficiency test, the questionnaires, the interview questions, and the procedures involved in this research project were reviewed by the Brock University Research Ethics Board before the study was conducted. The study commenced only after the Board had given its approval (See Appendix F).

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the results of the investigation aimed at identifying the language needs of ESL students in an intensive English language program at a Canadian university. The data, gathered from interviews and questionnaires, and a proficiency test, were analyzed to determine what specific content international students think the program needs to have in order for them to succeed academically and socially in the English-speaking environment of a university in Canada.

This chapter is divided into three main sections: (a) Analysis of Data from Students, (b) Analysis of Data from Instructors, and (c) Analysis of Data from Administrator. For the student data analysis, the material is organized under four headings: (a) Background Data, (b) Questionnaire Data, (c) Interview Data, and (d) Proficiency Test Data. For the instructor data analysis, the material is organized under three headings: (a) Background Data, (b) Interview Data, and (c) Questionnaire Data. The administrator data analysis is a review of the comments made by the administrator during her interview.

Analysis of Data from Students

In order to get as comprehensive a view as possible of the language learning experiences of the students who participated in this study, the researcher looked at four sets or types of data. Demographic information relating to the students' background was analyzed and compared, wherever applicable, with the students' responses to questions regarding their language learning experiences given on the questionnaire and in the interview. Finally, scores extracted from the ELP proficiency test records were compared with these responses to create an overall view of the students' progress in meeting their language learning goals.

Background Data

Several interesting demographic features stand out immediately from a quick survey of the background data, a summary of which is presented in Table 3, with more detail in Appendix G.

First, the participants represent a narrow age range (19-26 yrs.), with a mean age of 21.53 years. Their relative youthfulness provides a view that may not necessarily be representative of the majority of ESL speakers studying in Canadian universities. More mature participants might have given different responses and expressed different needs and preferences.

Second, all the participants are from the Far East. An overwhelming majority (75.47%) of the participants come from one single country of origin, China, and an even higher percentage (82.35%) claim Chinese (Mandarin / Cantonese) as a first language. Furthermore, Again, this may not be representative of the overall group that is the object of this study. Participants from Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Central and South America might well have expressed different viewpoints if they had been part of the study.

Third, the participants all spent a relatively short time in Canada, with a mean of 13.35 months (approximately 1 year and 1 month) and received an average of 12.65 months of ESL instruction in Canada (in the ELP). Learners with a longer period of ESL instruction in Canada would almost certainly respond differently to questions about the effectiveness of the instruction they received in this country. The longer the period of instruction, the greater the effectiveness of the instruction, or at least the more likely it is

Table 3

Summary of Background Information of Students

Gender:	Female: 9; Male: 8
Age range:	19 - 26 yrs.
Countries of origin:	China: 13; South Korea: 3; Taiwan: 1
First Languages:	Chinese (Mandarin/Cantonese); Korean
Second Language:	English
Amount of time in Canada:	Range: 4 mths. - 2.5 yrs.
Program of study and level:	ELP (3): 1; ELP (4): 11; ELP (5): 5
Amount of ESL instruction in Canada (in months/years):	Range: 4 mths. - 2 yrs.
Amount of in-country ESL instruction (in years):	Range: 3 - 12 yrs.
ESL instruction in other country and amount of time (in years):	1 student in Australia (1 month)
Standardized tests (TOEFL, TOEIC, MELAB, etc.) and Score:	TOEFL: 3 students; Range: 530 - 570 TOEIC: 1 student; 750 IELTS: 2 students; Range: 5.5 – 6 None: 11 students

that the learner will judge the instruction to be effective, since he or she may have observed greater progress in his or her language learning. One participant had as little as 4 months of ESL instruction in Canada, and another had only 5 months. It is unlikely that these participants observed much progress in their ability to communicate in English. In contrast, 3 participants had 2 or more years of ESL instruction in Canada, and these participants would no doubt be in a better position to judge how effective their instruction had been.

Fourth, as was noted earlier, the study was limited to Levels 3, 4, and 5 of the ELP. However, Level 4 dominated the sample (64.71%), and Level 3 was extremely under-represented, with only 1 participant. The findings of the study, thus, reflect the needs and preferences of a very specific group of ESL learners: those with a fairly high degree of proficiency in English. Given that the average amount of time spent in Canada was 13.35 months, as noted above, it is likely that most of the achieved proficiency was developed outside of Canada. In fact, in this study, the amount of ESL instruction in Canada was not a predictor of level of proficiency in English. One of the participants (Student 8), who had entered the ELP with 8 years of prior ESL instruction in his home country and had received 2 years of ESL instruction in Canada in the ELP was still in Level 4. Yet another participant (Student 16), with only 3 years of home-country ESL instruction and 1.5 years of instruction in the ELP, was already in Level 5. Another participant (Student 15), with 5 years of ESL instruction in his home country and 2.5 years of living in Canada, which included 1.5 years of instruction in the ELP, was still in Level 4. Still another participant (Student 7) with 6 years of home-country ESL instruction and only 10 months of ELP instruction, was already in Level 5. Thus, a

greater amount of ESL instruction, whether in Canada in the ELP or in the home country, did not guarantee greater proficiency in English among the students in this study.

Another way to look at this is to compare the amount of ESL instruction received in Canada for those in Level 4 and those in Level 5. (Level 3 can be ignored, since it was represented by only 1 participant.) Among Level 4 participants, the amount of ESL instruction in Canada ranged widely, from 4 months to 24 months (2 yrs.) - a range of 20 months. Among Level 5 participants, the range was much narrower: from 12 to 24 months (1-2 yrs.), representing a range of only 12 months. For Level 4 participants, the average amount of ESL instruction in Canada was 12.18 months; for Level 5 participants, it was 15.20 months—a difference of only 3.02 months. Translated, this implies that, on average, it takes a student 3.02 months to progress from Level 4 to Level 5, and generally from one level to another. This suggests that students could be expected to complete all six levels in about 18 months, although the ELP allows 14 weeks (3.5 months) for each level, i.e., 21 months to complete all six levels in the program. In fact, while the data in this study would predict that an average student could complete the whole program in 18 months, nearly one third of the sample (6 participants) had spent 18 months or more in the program (two of them had spent as much as 24 months), and among this group, the majority (4 participants) had progressed only as far as Level 4. This anomaly in the statistics may be due to the extremely small sample size and to the uneven distribution across the range of levels, which is biased in favour of Level 4. While this is true, there are other conclusions that emerge from the anomaly:

1. Students come into the program with vastly different levels of proficiency in English.
2. Students progress at vastly different speeds through the various levels.

3. The program may not be sufficiently sensitive to the individual needs of each student to offset the differences mentioned in (1) and (2).

Fifth, home-country ESL instruction forms a major part of the language learning experience of all the participants in the study. The average number of years of home-country ESL instruction for the entire group was 7.18, and the amount ranged from 3 years to 12 years. Given that these students were in their late teens and early 20s at the time of the study, most of them began learning English when they were quite young. Student 1, for example, the student with the longest period of home-country ESL instruction (12 yrs.), probably began learning English when she was around 10 years old, as did Student 17. Students 8, 13, and 14 began when they were 11 years old. Six others began at the age of 12. The average age at which the students in this study started learning English was 12.94 years. Two factors emerge from the data. First, since the students in the study began learning English at a relatively early age, they might be expected to have picked up the language with greater ease than adult learners. This factor might well have influenced the way they responded to the questions on the questionnaire, since their early second-language learning experiences would have been quite different from those of someone starting to learn English as an adult. Second, given that on average the students in the study had over 7 years of ESL instruction in their home country, it is somewhat surprising that they did not have a higher level of proficiency in English when they arrived in Canada. For example, Student 13 and Student 17 both came from China with 10 years of prior home-country ESL instruction, and even after approximately 1 year in the ELP, they were still in Level 4. Student 2, with 9 years of in-country ESL instruction in China and 1.5 years of ELP instruction, was also in Level 4. Most surprising of all was Student 3, who had 9 years of ESL instruction in South Korea

and was still in Level 3 after 5 months of ELP instruction. These examples would suggest that the kind of ESL instruction being given in countries, such as China and South Korea, is not effective in raising the level of proficiency of the students in a time-efficient manner. It may also indicate that the ESL instruction that these students receive in their home country might be interfering with the ESL instruction they receive in Canada. This suggests further that ESL programs in Canada may need to put greater emphasis on remediation in the teaching of ESL to counteract this interference.

Sixth, the data regarding standardized tests produced mixed results. Eight out of the 17 students in the study had done a standardized test of one kind or another. The three standardized tests represented in this group were the TOEFL, TOEIC, and IELTS. The TOEFL scores ranged from 530 to 570 (on the old system), the one TOEIC score was 750, and the two IELTS scores were 5.5 and 6 (two more students who had done the IELTS did not provide a score). The TOEFL scores were in the mid to high range. The TOEIC score was, likewise, in the mid to high range. The IELTS scores, however, were only in the mid range. It would appear that the TOEFL and TOEIC scores were slightly more generous than the IELTS scores. For example, the student with the TOEIC score (Student 3) was in Level 3, even though his TOEIC score was equivalent to a 7.5 on the IELTS. The student with the actual IELTS score of 5.5 (Student 1) was in Level 4 and the student with the actual IELTS score of 6 (Student 7) was in Level 5. It appears that scores on standardized test cannot always be relied on as determinant of English proficiency. This observation is in keeping with anecdotal evidence collected by the current researcher from both students and universities that high scores on standardized tests are not always an accurate predictor of the student's ability to function adequately in an English-speaking academic environment. Given that the tests do not always reflect speakers'

abilities, it is incumbent upon universities to adjust their programs to compensate for this deficiency.

Seventh, there was only 1 student in the study (Student 11) who had received additional ESL instruction in a country other than the home country (China) and Canada. The country in question was Australia, and the student spent a mere 1 month there, so no appreciable effect might be expected to have occurred as a result of this instruction. Given the absence of significant data on the influence of ESL instruction in a country other than the home country or Canada, this issue will be disregarded.

Questionnaire Data

The student participants responded to a set of 14 questions regarding their language learning experience in the ELP and their attitudes to and perceptions of English in general. Their responses will be discussed below in thematic groupings rather than in the order in which the questions appeared on the questionnaire. The 14 questions fall into four broad groups: (a) self-evaluation, (b) evaluation of the ELP, (c) relationship and attitude to English in general, and (d) recommendations to other ESL learners.

Self-evaluation

The questions involving self-evaluation asked the students to: (a) rate their general comprehension of English communication both inside and outside the classroom, (b) rate their level of confidence in using the four English language skills and grammar, (c) rate their ability in using the four English language skills and grammar, and (d) identify the aspect(s) of their use of English that need(s) to be developed the most for outside-the-classroom communication. The data gathered from the questionnaires are presented and analyzed below under these four groupings.

General English comprehension. Recognizing that communication in the ESL classroom is somewhat different from regular English communication in the "real" world (given that ESL teachers routinely adjust the level of their communication to match the level of their listeners), the current study sought to quantify this difference in terms of the ESL learners' own perceptions of the difference. It looked at how ESL learners rate their comprehension of what goes on *in* the classroom (Question 1) as opposed to what goes on *outside* the classroom (Question 9).

Table 4 presents the students' ratings (expressed as a percentage) of their in-classroom comprehension for each of the 17 students in the study.

Several interesting facts emerge from these data. First, the students who began learning English at an early age gave themselves the highest ratings for in-classroom comprehension. For example, Students 1 and 17 began at around age 10 and rated their comprehension at 90% and 86%, respectively. Similarly, Students 8, 13, and 14 began at age 11 and rated their comprehension at 90%, 95%, and 98%, respectively. In contrast, Student 3, who began at the age of 16, rated his in-classroom comprehension at only 70%, and Student 12 (one of the two oldest student in the sample, at 26 years), who began at the age of 19, rated her in-classroom comprehension at just 60%. (An exception to this general pattern is Student 15, who began at the age of 18 but gave himself a rather high in-classroom comprehension rating of 90%.) The pattern observed here is not surprising, since the students who started learning English the earliest would naturally have the most ESL classroom experience. The implication for ESL teaching is that ESL teachers need to be aware of the amount of ESL classroom experience that their students

Table 4

English Comprehension in the Classroom (Expressed as a Percentage)

Student	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**	**15**	**16**	**17**	**Mean**
Percentage	90	90	70	93	85	80	90	90	90	80	85	60	95	98	90	90	86	85.94

have, and make a conscious effort to compensate for those students whose classroom experience is lower than the class average. The finding is also in keeping with the notion that younger learners absorb the language more easily and instinctively than older learners, and the earlier the second language learning starts, the better.

Second, lower-level students rated their in-classroom comprehension lower than higher-level students. For example, the only Level 3 student in the sample (Student 3) gave himself a 70% rating (the lowest in the group). By contrast, the mean rating for Level 4 was 86.64% and for Level 5 it was 87.6%. This would suggest that ESL teachers need to pay more attention to communicating at a simpler level when they are teaching a lower-level class.

Third, a relationship was observed between the amount of time spent in Canada and the rate of in-classroom comprehension. The student who gave herself the highest rating (Student 14, at 98%) had been in Canada for 30 months (2.5 years), whereas the student who gave himself the lowest rating (Student 3, at 70%, and also one of the two oldest students in the sample) had been in Canada for a mere 5 months. In general, those who gave themselves ratings between 80 and 90% had been in the country for less than a year, in many cases only 6 to 8 months. As before, ESL teachers might benefit from knowing how long their students had been in Canada in order to use their Canadian experience to maximize their students' in-classroom comprehension.

On the whole, the students in the study felt that they had a fairly high level of in-classroom comprehension, the mean rating for the entire sample being 85.94%.
To see whether the comprehension rate extended beyond the ESL classroom, the study also asked the students to rate their outside-the-classroom level of comprehension (Question 9). The results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Percentage of English Comprehension Outside the Classroom

Student	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**	**15**	**16**	**17**	**Mean**
Percentage	80	70	70	90	75	70	70	70	80	80	75	70	60	80	80	95	50	74.41

As Table 6 reveals, the outside-the-classroom comprehension rate lagged considerably behind the in-classroom comprehension rate, with a mean rate of 74.41% for the entire group (as opposed to 85.94% for in-classroom comprehension). This finding is consonant with the anecdotally based conclusion that it is generally more difficult to understand ordinary native speakers than it is to understand second-language teachers.

The table also reveals some rather interesting and unexpected patterns. First, there were two students in the group (Students 3 and 10) who gave themselves the same rating for both in-classroom comprehension and outside-the-classroom comprehension. This appears to contradict conventional wisdom. However, it should be noted that both students rated themselves rather low (70% and 80%, respectively), and this would suggest that at lower levels of comprehension, students may not the best judges of their own proficiency.

Second,and more startling, two students (Students 12 and 16) gave themselves a *higher* rating for outside-the-classroom comprehension. This is quite counterintuitive and anomalous, and there seems to be no way to account for the anomaly other than to say the students were possibly confused about the meaning of the question. Third, the student who had spent the longest time in Canada (Student 14) gave herself a relatively low outside-the-classroom comprehension rating (80%) even though she gave herself the highest in-classroom rating (98%). This seems to go against the expectation that those who had spent more time in Canada would be more accustomed to communicating with native English speakers. Apart from these anomalies, the findings of this particular aspect of the study suggest that ESL instructors may need to pay more attention to narrowing the

Table 6

Comparison of In-classroom Comprehension and Outside-the-classroom Comprehension

Student	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**	**15**	**16**	**17**	**Mean**
In-class	90	90	70	93	85	80	90	90	90	80	85	60	95	98	90	90	86	85.94
Outside	80	70	70	90	75	70	70	70	80	80	75	70	60	80	80	95	50	74.41

gap between in-classroom comprehension and outside-the-classroom comprehension, perhaps through increased used of "authentic" materials in the classroom. This issue will be discussed in greater detail later, in the qualitative analysis of the instructors' interviews.

Level of confidence in using English. The students were asked to rate their level of confidence (on a scale of 1 to 100) in using English in all its various forms (Question 5). The use of English in this case was broken down into the four traditional English language skills and grammar. The data are presented in Table 7.

As the table shows, the area of greatest confidence was writing and the area of least confidence was grammar. In order of decreasing confidence, the skills are: Writing (M=76.18), Reading (M=74.41), Speaking (M=72.94), Listening (M=71.18), Grammar (M=69.41).

This order parallels exactly the amount of control that the ESL learner can exercise in the execution of each of the four skills. The learner has the most personal control over writing and the least control over listening. Reading rates lower than writing because even though it is a so-called "passive" (or receptive skill) rather than an "active" (or performative) skill, the learner cannot control the vocabulary and complexity of grammatical structure in the material he or she is reading. (The issue of vocabulary will be discussed below in connection with the open-ended Question 12).

Speaking ranks below reading because it is performative rather than receptive and it ranks below the other performative skill, writing, because it is time-constrained to a greater extent than writing is (i.e., spoken production needs to occur fluently in a relatively short period of time and thinking has to be done "on the fly") and also because it involves pronunciation, which poses considerable difficulty for some non-native

Table 7

Level of Confidence in Ability in the Four Language Skills and Grammar (on a scale of 1 to 100)

Student	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**	**15**	**16**	**17**	**Mean**
Reading	70	80	90	75	80	70	65	50	90	90	90	60	80	85	60	60	70	74.41
Writing	50	80	80	80	80	80	75	65	70	90	90	95	80	85	60	65	70	76.18
Speaking	60	60	70	85	75	60	75	70	70	90	95	80	70	80	75	70	55	72.94
Listening	80	60	60	80	80	50	75	60	90	70	80	50	80	80	80	70	65	71.18
Grammar	50	60	85	75	80	50	50	85	80	90	60	50	90	80	50	65	80	69.41
Mean	62	68	77	79	79	62	68	66	80	86	83	67	80	82	65	66	68	72.82

speakers (especially those with Oriental backgrounds, as in this study). Listening offers absolutely no element of control to the ELS learner. In addition, it is time-constrained, is subject to variations in speed and the quality of articulation of the native speaker being listened to, and may involve unfamiliar vocabulary with no possibility of consulting a dictionary (as in reading). These observations suggest that ESL teachers should focus on those aspects that take control away from the learner. More attention needs to be given to teaching the learner how to compensate for this loss of control. For example, practice in "speed listening" would help learners process incoming information more rapidly and thus give them greater confidence in their listening abilities.

Some anomalies appear in the data. For example, contrary to the general trend, some students recorded a high level of confidence in their use of grammar; these were Students 10 and 13 (M=90), Students 3 and 8 (M=85), and Students 5, 9, 14, and 17 (M=80). In this subgroup, Students 8, 13, and 17 actually rated grammar as their area of greatest confidence. It is difficult to account for these anomalies except to say that the heavy emphasis on grammar in ESL instruction in countries such as China may account for this effect. The three students who gave grammar the highest confidence rating had among the highest amounts of home-country ESL instruction (8, 10, and 10 yrs., respectively). The implication of this finding is that the effect of home-country ESL instruction (discussed earlier) should not be underestimated.

Some other interesting features emerge from these data. First, the student with the longest stay in Canada (Student 14) did not have very high levels of confidence (R=85; W=85; S=80; L=80; G=80), and was certainly not the most confident in the group as a whole. In terms of level of confidence, she ranked third (M=82), behind Student 10 (M=86) and Student 11 (M=83). Extraordinarily, both Students 10 and 11 were among

those who had the shortest stay in Canada, at 6 months each (the shortest being 4 months). This would suggest that length of stay in Canada is not necessarily a predictor of self-confidence. Second, the student with the greatest amount of home-country ESL instruction (Student 1, at 12 years) had the lowest level of confidence (M=62). Similarly, Student 17, with 10 years of home-country ESL instruction had a mean confidence level of 68, well below the group mean of 72.82. This finding is, once again, contradictory to what might be expected, all else held constant.

Krashen (1982) noted that lack of self-confidence can seriously inhibit language acquisition and hold back the learner's progress. Along with motivation and anxiety, self-confidence forms part of the affective filter in Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, according to which the learner's emotional states have an indirect influence on how much progress the learner makes: the more positive the emotional states, the greater the progress. Self-confidence and progress appear to have a mutually reinforcing relationship. Together they create a feedback loop in which self-confidence leads to progress, which in turn leads to greater self-confidence, which naturally produces further progress, which once again inspires self-confidence, and so on. Of course, the reverse is true as well: lack of self-confidence can inhibit progress, which leads to lower self-confidence, which in its turn holds back progress even further, and this produces an even greater crisis of self-confidence. It would appear that the overall self-confidence of the students in the study was relatively high (72.82%). This may be an overly optimistic estimate on the part of the students, since their progress as revealed by the proficiency test did not match this level of confidence. This will be discussed further when the data from the proficiency test are analyzed below. The relationship between self-confidence

and progress will be taken up again in the analysis of data from the interviews with the instructors later on in the chapter.

Proficiency in the four language skills and grammar. The students were asked to rate their proficiency in the four language skills and grammar on a 5-point scale, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest (Question 6). The data collected for this question are presented in Table 8.

As the table indicates, speaking was judged by far to be the area of *least* proficiency (i.e., the area that needed the most improvement), and grammar the area of *greatest* proficiency (i.e., the area that needed the least improvement). This rating of grammar appears to contradict the rating in the previous section, where grammar was rated as the area of *least* confidence. Surely, one would expect that greater proficiency inspires greater confidence, or conversely, that lower confidence springs from lower proficiency. It is difficult to account for this contradiction (it is possible that the respondents misunderstood the question). With respect to the four language skills, they line up almost exactly with the data from the previous section on level of confidence with the exception that in that section it was listening that had the lowest level of confidence, whereas here it is speaking that is most in need of improvement. In this section, the areas line up as follows: Speaking (M=2.41), Listening (M=2.65), Reading (M=2.94), Writing (M=3.35). This would suggest lack of confidence may not always determine priorities. While ESL learners may not feel confident in their listening skills, they may judge speaking to be a more urgent concern than listening. This may be because they realize that they have greater control over speaking and can, therefore, actually do something concrete to bring about improvement in that area. It may also be because they have a perception that speaking accounts for a larger percentage of their communication activity than listening,

Table 8

Self-evaluation (on a 5-point scale) of Proficiency in the Four Language Skills and Grammar (from lowest to highest)

Student	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**	**15**	**16**	**17**	**Mean**
Reading	1	5	3	2	1	4	3	2	4	5	2	3	2	4	5	2	2	2.94
Writing	4	4	5	4	2	3	3	4	2	5	3	2	3	5	4	1	3	3.35
Speaking	3	2	1	5	3	5	1	3	1	1	1	1	5	2	1	5	1	2.41
Listening	1	1	2	3	4	5	1	1	5	1	4	4	4	1	2	4	2	2.65
Grammar	5	3	4	1	5	3	2	5	3	5	5	5	1	3	3	3	4	3.53

or that there is a greater stake involved in speaking than in listening. Whatever the case, the ELS instructor needs to be aware of these concerns and priorities and needs to make an effort to address them in the kinds of activities that take place in the classroom.

Aspects that need the most development for outside-the-classroom use. The students were asked to identify those aspects of English use that they thought needed to be developed the most in order to meet their outside-the-classroom communication needs (Question 12). This was an open-ended question, so the students were free to answer in any way they thought fit.

Not surprisingly, all the participants indicated that the skills that needed the most development were speaking and listening. Some of the students went further, and added that these two skills specifically are of critical importance to them. They also noted that they wanted to be fluent in speaking because this would make it possible for them to get a better job and it would make them more confident in communicating with others in English. Apart from listening and speaking, more than half of the participants indicated that vocabulary was also important to them and it is one of the areas they needed to develop. It is significant that they chose to mention vocabulary here. Earlier, it was mentioned that vocabulary is what makes reading and listening more difficult than writing and speaking, since in both reading and listening there is no control over the vocabulary. It should be noted that vocabulary is not considered a separate area of study in ESL instruction, and is usually dealt with on an *ad hoc* basis, tucked in wherever it is convenient. However, the responses here would indicate that vocabulary needs to be given more attention than it has received so far in the standard ESL curriculum: it needs to be taught in a more systematic manner as a subject in its own right.

Evaluation of the ELP

The students were asked to rate the helpfulness of the classroom activities they were given in the ELP on a 5-point scale of increasing helpfulness (Question 7). The students' responses are presented in Table 9.

From the table, it is clear that Reading and Grammar activities were judged to be the most helpful (M=3.76 each), followed by Listening activities (M=3.59) and Speaking activities (M=3.53). Writing activities were judged by far to be the least helpful (M=3.00). These findings are consonant in general with the findings in other sections of this study relating to level of confidence and proficiency in the five areas of study. Listening and Speaking could be expected to receive low ratings here given that these two areas were assigned lower confidence ratings and lower proficiency ratings in the previous sections. The conclusion that might be drawn is that the speaking and listening activities used in the ELP are not meeting the needs of the students sufficiently to increase their confidence and proficiency in these areas. A useful line of inquiry for further research would be an investigation into the specifics of which activities are helpful and which ones are not, and why these activities are either helpful or unhelpful. In the case of activities that were judged to be unhelpful, it would be worthwhile to inquire what sort of activities the students *would* consider helpful. Writing activities would be of special interest here, since they received such a low rating relative to activities in the other areas.

Overall, the activities across all the five areas get a rating that is slightly above "average." The mean of the five means is 3.53, which is the equivalent of 70.6%. This suggests that there is plenty of room for improvement in the ELP program. The

Table 9

Helpfulness of ELP Classroom Activities in the Four Language Skill Areas and Grammar (on a 5-point scale of increasing helpfulness)

Student	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**	**15**	**16**	**17**	**Mean**
Reading	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	5	5	4	3	5	4	1	3	4	4	3.76
Writing	2	5	3	3	2	4	3	4	3	4	3	2	2	1	3	4	3	3.00
Speaking	4	4	4	3	3	3	4	5	2	4	3	3	3	4	4	3	4	3.53
Listening	4	5	3	2	3	3	5	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	3.59
Grammar	3	3	4	4	3	5	5	4	5	4	5	1	4	2	4	5	3	3.76
Mean	3.4	4.2	3.6	3.2	3.0	3.6	4.0	4.2	3.8	4.0	3.6	3.0	3.2	2.4	3.6	3.8	3.4	3.53

helpfulness of classroom activities is, surely, a measure of the effectiveness of the program, and if the overall helpfulness is rated by the students at 3.53 on a 5-point scale, then it can be concluded that the students have judged the program to be only partially effective, or, to express it in quantitative terms, only 70.6% effective. It should be noted, however, that there is a rather wide spread in the ratings of individual students, with a low of 2.4 (or 48%; Student 14) and a high of 4.2 (or 84 %; Students 2 and 8). This means that there are at least some students who are highly satisfied with the program as a whole. Note that when the median and mode are considered instead of the mean, a different result is obtained. The *median* for Writing is 3 and for Reading, Speaking, Listening, and Grammar it is 4. The *mode* for Writing is 3, for Listening 3.5, and for Reading, Speaking, and Grammar 4 (Table 10). These present a more positive evaluation than the mean.

Relationship and Attitude to English in General

The students were asked to rate the importance of each of the four language skills and grammar for the class they were currently enrolled in on a 5-point scale of increasing importance (Question 2). Their ratings are presented in Table 11.

Speaking and listening were rated at the top (M=4.53 for both). Reading (M=3.94) and writing (M=3.82) were assigned lesser importance. As might be expected, grammar was ranked the least important (M=3.53). These findings are consistent with earlier findings that give primary importance to listening and speaking and secondary importance to reading and writing. However, it is interesting to note that one student (Student 5) rated all five areas as equally important. Three others (Students 2, 8, and 10) rated all four language skills as equally important and gave grammar a lower rating. The students were also asked to do

Table 10

Helpfulness of ELP Classroom Activities Showing Median (column 9) and Mode

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**	**15**	**16**	**17**	**Mode**
Reading	1	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	4
Writing	1	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	5	3
Speaking	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	4
Listening	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	3.5
Grammar	1	2	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	4

Table 11

Importance of the Four Language Skills and Grammar for Current Class (on a 5-point scale of increasing importance)

Student	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**	**15**	**16**	**17**	**Mean**
Reading	3	5	4	5	4	3	3	5	4	5	3	3	3	5	4	4	4	3.94
Writing	5	5	3	4	4	3	3	5	3	5	3	2	4	5	3	5	3	3.82
Speaking	4	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	3	5	5	5	5	1	5	4.53
Listening	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4	4	2	4	4.53
Grammar	3	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	3	2	2	1	4	4	5	3	4	3.53

exactly the same kind of rating for other classes they had taken (Question 4). The data are presented in Table 12. These ratings are very similar to the previous ratings. This would suggest that there is a consistency across the board and that regardless of the class, the five areas have the same degree of importance relative to each other.

To go into somewhat greater depth, the students were asked to rate the importance of specific language-related tasks for success at university (Question 3). On the questionnaire, the tasks were divided into two groups: (a) those related to spoken English, and (b) those related to written English. However, for the purposes of analysis, they will be grouped according to the four language skills: (a) Reading, (b) Writing, (c) Speaking, and (4) Listening.

Table 13 shows the data for Reading and Table 14 shows the data for Writing. Three tasks were given for reading and four tasks for writing, although more could possibly be identified. Of the three reading tasks, reading books or textbooks was rated as the most important (M=4.00), followed by reading course handouts (M=3.94) and reading articles (M=3.82). It should be noted that two students (Students 5 and 10) rated all three tasks as equally important, giving them a 4. Overall, all three tasks received high ratings (between 75 and 80%). This would suggest that all three reading tasks should be part of the preparation for university that ESL students receive in a program such as ELP, especially at the higher levels. Furthermore, the reading materials used should simulate as closely as possible the actual materials used in university courses, so that the students will have a good sense of what they will encounter when they enter college or university.

Of the four writing tasks, writing short papers was rated the most important (M=4.12), followed by writing long papers (M=4.00), followed by writing exams

Table 12

Importance of the Four Language Skills and Grammar for Other Classes Taken (on a 5-point scale of increasing importance)

Student	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**	**15**	**16**	**17**	**Mean**
Reading	3	5	4	5	4	3	3	5	4	5	3	3	4	5	3	1	4	3.76
Writing	5	5	3	4	4	4	4	5	3	5	3	2	5	5	2	2	4	3.82
Speaking	5	5	5	5	3	3	4	5	5	5	3	5	3	5	4	5	5	4.41
Listening	4	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	4.65
Grammar	4	4	4	4	3	5	3	4	4	5	4	1	4	4	3	3	4	3.71

Table 13

The Importance of Various Reading Tasks

Student	Reading books / textbooks	Reading articles	Reading course handouts
1	3	3	3
2	5	5	5
3	5	5	3
4	2	2	3
5	4	4	4
6	5	2	4
7	4	4	5
8	5	4	4
9	5	5	5
10	4	4	4
11	5	5	5
12	3	4	3
13	4	4	4
14	4	4	4
15	4	3	5
16	3	3	2
17	3	4	4
Mean	4.00	3.82	3.94

Table 14

The Importance of Various Writing Tasks

Student	Writing short papers	Writing long papers	Doing written assignments	Writing exams
1	4	5	3	4
2	5	4	5	5
3	5	5	4	4
4	4	2	3	3
5	4	4	4	4
6	2	3	3	4
7	4	4	4	5
8	4	5	4	4
9	4	3	4	4
10	4	4	4	4
11	5	5	5	3
12	5	5	2	3
13	3	3	3	5
14	5	5	4	5
15	4	4	3	3
16	4	4	1	4
17	4	3	3	3
Mean	4.12	4.00	3.47	3.94

(M=3.94). Doing written assignments (for example, answering questions from the textbook) was given the lowest rating (M=3.47). It should be noted that the same two students (Students 5 and 10) who gave a flat rating to all the reading tasks, did the same thing for the writing tasks, again using a rating of 4. As with the reading tasks, the ratings for the writing tasks were high, indicating that these tasks, especially the first three, should feature prominently in the ESL curriculum, especially at the higher levels.

Table 15 presents the data for Listening and Table 16 present the data for Speaking. Four tasks were chosen for listening and five for speaking out of the many possible tasks that could have been listed. These were deemed to be the most representative of the listening and speaking tasks that ESL students will encounter at college or university.

As Table 15 shows, of the four listening tasks, understanding lectures received the highest rating (M=4.35), followed by understanding presentations (M=4.18), followed by understanding instructions and taking notes during lectures (both M=3.94). All four tasks were given extremely high ratings and were on average rated more important than both the reading and writing tasks. This is in keeping with earlier findings in regard to the importance of listening.

Of the five speaking tasks listed in Table 16, taking part in class discussions was rated the highest (M=4.35), followed by giving presentations (4.12), followed by discussing issues with a professor and asking questions in class (both M=3.94). Discussing issues with classmates was given the lowest rating (M=3.71). As with the listening tasks, these speaking tasks were given extremely high ratings in the same range as the listening tasks. Once again, this is in harmony with earlier indications of the

Table 15

The Importance of Various Listening Tasks

Student	Understanding lectures	Understanding instructions	Understanding presentations	Taking notes during lectures
1	4	4	5	3
2	5	5	5	5
3	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	3	2
5	5	5	4	4
6	5	3	2	5
7	5	4	4	4
8	5	5	5	5
9	5	5	5	4
10	4	4	4	1
11	5	3	5	5
12	5	3	3	3
13	3	4	3	5
14	4	4	5	4
15	5	4	5	5
16	2	2	5	5
17	4	4	4	3
Mean	4.35	3.94	4.18	3.94

Table 16

The Importance of Various Speaking Tasks

Student	Taking part in class discussions	Discussing issues with classmates	Discussing issues with professor	Asking questions in class	Giving presentations
1	5	4	3	3	5
2	5	5	5	4	4
3	5	4	5	5	5
4	5	5	5	3	4
5	4	3	3	3	4
6	4	3	4	4	3
7	4	4	3	4	5
8	5	4	5	5	4
9	5	3	4	3	4
10	4	4	4	4	4
11	5	4	4	5	5
12	5	3	5	4	5
13	3	3	3	4	5
14	4	3	3	5	5
15	4	4	4	4	3
16	3	4	4	4	1
17	4	3	3	3	4
Mean	4.35	3.71	3.94	3.94	4.12

importance of developing speaking skills.

Knowing that the purpose for which one learns English determines one's needs, expectations, and motivation in an ESL program, the study asked the students in what specific situations they expected to use English, once they had completed the program (Question 10). In response to this question, the participants indicated that they expected to use English at work and/or in job related activities, at a party with native speakers, at a bank, at a hospital, in a Canadian setting such as in a university, or when talking to a lawyer (for immigration purposes), buying something, watching TV, doing international business, making new friends (especially with native English speakers), talking to someone from another country, and looking for a job. It should be noted that the vast majority of these purposes for learning English are related to instrumental motivation as defined by Gardner & Lambert (1972). A few are related to integrative motivation, and none are related to social group identification as described by Dulay et al., (1982).

This is only to be expected, since most students who come to Canada to study intend to return to their home country after their education is completed, so they would not be likely to want to learn English as a means of identifying with Canadians (social group identification). ESL instructors need to take this into account when selecting materials and activities to use in their classes. More will be said on motivation later, when discussing the instructors' comments on how they deal with motivation (or lack of it) in their classes.

In a similar vein, the study asked the students to indicate what activities they do currently that require English (Question 11). In response to this question, the participants indicated the following activities: watching movies, having dinner time with their host family, communicating with native English speakers, making a phone call to a

friend, doing business with Canadians, studying, going to a bar, playing sports with native speakers, and at work.

Students' Language Learning Strategies

The students were asked to list the strategies they use on their own to increase their proficiency in the four language skill areas and grammar (Question 8). This was an open-ended question, and the respondents were free to write whatever they wished. Their responses are presented in tabular form in Table 17.

As noted in Chapter Two, in discussing the research of Hong-Nam and Leavell (2006), the learner's personal learning strategies are of particular relevance to the achievement of proficiency and ESL instructors need to work in concert with these strategies rather than against them. It was also noted in Chapter Two that Krashen and Brown (2007) consider learning strategies crucial for developing Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), a concept that is particularly pertinent to the present study. What is instructive about the responses listed in Table 17 is that the activities mentioned may well be serving a compensatory function. This is not a reference to the "compensation strategies" identified as one of the six categories in the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). The students are not compensating for their own personal limitations, but rather, the limitations of the program. In other words, the students are adopting learning strategies on their own to make up for what is lacking in their in-class ESL instruction. Affective strategies are noticeably absent from the lists, and cognitive and social strategies feature prominently. Metacognitive strategies are not explicitly mentioned, but they are implied in the way the students appear to be taking charge of their own learning by doing many of the things that should be done more intensively in

Table 17

Students' Own Strategies for Increasing their Proficiency

Skill/Area	Learning Strategies
Reading:	Read magazine/newspapers/books/articles, learn more vocabulary, try to find meaning of vocabulary from the context, read on the Internet.
Writing:	Write more and ask/let others help you to correct your mistakes, write a diary and a short essay, use transition words, learn new structures, transition words, and phrases, read more essays.
Speaking:	Speak more, practice/talk to native speakers, discuss a specific topic with friends, watch TV and imitate the way the native speakers speak, participate during the class, try not to be shy when speaking, find an opportunity to speak more often in English, use new idioms, talk to classmates and teachers.
Listening:	Watch TV, listen to the radio and music, watch news on TV and movies on DVD without subtitles, listen to tapes, watch movie, watch TV shows, take notes and get the main point.
Grammar:	Do exercises in the textbooks, study grammar books, use grammar in speaking and writing, preview before and review after grammar class.

the classroom, doing business with Canadians, studying, going to a bar, playing sports with native speakers, and at work.

Recommendations to Other ESL Students

The students were asked to use the experience they had gained in learning English in the ELP to help other ELS students improve their language skills outside the classroom (Question 13). In response to this question, the participants made the following recommendations: make friends with native speakers, keep learning, don't speak your native language, practice what you learn, speak and listen as much as possible, watch English movies.

Similarly, the students were asked to recommend to other ESL students intending to come to Canada to study what they could do to improve their English before coming to Canada (Question 14). In response to this question, the participants had the following recommendations: watch English TV shows, movies, and dramas and learn vocabulary (vocabulary was recommended by every participant) and grammar, and newcomers should pass a standardized test, such as TOEFL, before they come to Canada. It is interesting that the students mentioned vocabulary. Earlier it was pointed out that vocabulary should be a subject in its own right. This recommendation from the students support that claim. In addition to this, they also recommended learning about Canada and Canadian culture before coming to Canada.

Interview Data

The data gathered from the interviews with the students reflected many of the same concerns that were expressed in or emerged from the questionnaire, such as the need to improve speaking and listening skills. One issue, however, that stood out by the sheer frequency with which it came up was vocabulary. The word "vocabulary" was used 47

times during the course of the 17 interviews. There were, of course, other issues that were raised in the interviews that were not raised in the questionnaire. As in the previous section, the data in this section will be analyzed in broad thematic categories rather than in the order in which the questions were asked during the interviews, since many of the issues came up repeatedly in several different questions.

Purpose in Coming to Canada to Study English

It has generally been assumed that the students in the ELP come to Canada primarily to attend university, and that the ELP is merely a stepping stone on the way to achieving this goal. However, the data collected in the student interviews revealed that this is not necessarily the case. Only 12 out of the 17 students in the study indicated that their purpose in coming to Canada was to attend a Canadian university. One of the 12 said that after coming to Canada, he changed his mind and decided to go back to China to study. The remaining 5 indicated that they came to Canada simply to improve their English. Thus, it can be expected that only 64.7% of the sample (11 out of 17) will go on to study at a university in Canada. This finding is somewhat disappointing for the present study, since the study was aimed specifically at identifying the language-learning needs of non-native speakers of English who intend to receive postsecondary education in North America. In effect, this means that 35.3% of the sample had little to offer that was of any direct relevance to the specific aims of this study and the research questions it set out to answer. What the students in this portion of the sample did reveal is that their sole purpose in studying English was to get a better job. Nine out of the 10 students who specified their purpose in studying English said that it was to get a (better) job. While some of these were referring to jobs in their home country, 5 of them (Students 8, 11, 13, 14, and 15), that is, more than half, said they wanted to get a job in Canada. Only one of

the 10 (Student 7) was motivated by the desire to get experience in Canada and increase his knowledge. Those who were here just to improve their English intended to stay for about a year or less. Those who intended to get an education in Canada intended to stay for 4 or 5 years (or more), and 1 student (Student 15) actually said that he came to Canada intending to stay for *2 weeks*, but when he got here he fell in love with Canada and decided he wants to stay here forever. Obviously, the amount of time one intends to stay in Canada and the purpose of that stay will determine one's language learning needs. The course of study that one intends to pursue in Canada will also dictate the nature of the language learning program that best fits one's needs. In the present study, 4 students intended to get a BBA degree, 3 wanted to study Accounting, and 1 wanted Computer Science. One student said he wanted to go back to China to study Marketing. These data and the other information discussed above are presented in tabular from in Table 18. Several implications arise from this information. First, those who are in Canada to learn English simply because they want to get a "good" job when they go back to their home country will need a very different kind of program from those who are serious about studying at a Canadian university. This means that any program like the ELP which takes in students with a variety of different purposes for studying English needs to be organized in such a way that those who have academic aspirations are separated from those who do not. Those who want to use English as a means of getting a "good" job in their home country definitely do not need to develop or perfect their note-taking skills or improve their pronunciation so that they can make themselves understood by native English speakers. Clearly, one size does not fit all in the area of ESL instruction.

Second, when catering to the needs of those who are studying English to get a "good" job, it is important to keep in mind that in countries, such as South Korea,

Table 18

Purpose in Coming to Canada, Purpose in Studying English, Intended Length of Stay in Canada, Intended University Program, and University of Choice

Student	Purpose in coming to Canada	Purpose in studying English	Intended length of stay in Canada	Intended university program	University of choice
1	attend university	unspecified	unspecified	BBA	1 year at Brock; after that another university (unspecified)
2	attend university	unspecified	4-5 yrs.	Computer Science	unspecified
3	improve English	get a good job in Korea	< 1 yr.	N/A	N/A
4	attend university	unspecified	5 yrs.	BBA	unspecified
5	originally to attend university (now changed mind)	unspecified	2 yrs.	Marketing	(going back to China to study at a university there)
6	attend university	get a good job in China	4-5 yrs.	unspecified	unspecified
7	attend university	get Canadian experience (and better knowledge)	4-5 yrs.	BBA (wanted accounting)	unspecified
8	attend university	get a job in Canada	4.5 yrs. (perhaps longer)	BBA	unspecified
9	improve English	get a good job in Korea	< 1 yr.	N/A	N/A
10	attend university	unspecified	4-5 yrs.	Accounting	Brock
11	attend university	get a job in Canada (and later go back to work in China)	4 yrs. or more	Accounting	Brock
12	improve English	get a better job in Korea	1 yr.	N/A	N/A
13	attend university	get a job in Canada and later go back to China	4 yrs. + 1 or 2 yrs. more	Accounting	unspecified
14	attend university	get a job in Canada (if possible)	5 yrs. (perhaps more)	unspecified	unspecified
15	originally to improve English	get a job in Canada; get married and live in Canada	forever	Advertising	unspecified
16	attend college	unspecified	2 yrs.	unspecified	unspecified
17	improve English	unspecified	1 yr.	N/A	may consider studying at Brock

knowledge of English is a status symbol rather than a matter of practical necessity, and a "good" job is one that pays more money, not necessarily one that requires the ability to use English. Student 3, from South Korea, admitted this indirectly when he said, "English is important to get a good job in Korea." It is difficult to imagine how every good job in Korea would require knowledge of English, especially since the vast majority of jobs in that country would involve interaction between Koreans only. Student 9 was a university student in Korea with 1 year left to graduate; she took 8 months off from her studies to come to Canada and improve her English so that she could go back, complete her degree, and get a "better" job. Her explanation: "If I want to find a job, I should have good English skills, that's why I came here." Unconsciously, she revealed that she did not really need English to *perform* her job, just to *get* it. Student 12, also a Korean, was the *only one* who specifically said that she wanted a job in which she could actually *use* her English. She said: "I want to speak English where I will be working." Given the motivation of getting a "good" job, it is not difficult to understand why some of these students find the academically oriented activities in the ELP "unhelpful." For example, Students 3, 9, and 12 all felt that it was not very helpful to listen to recorded lectures and practice note-taking skills. Student 12 said specifically that the pronunciation class was "a waste of my time," and she was not particularly concerned about note-taking skills, commenting:

> The listening class required the note-taking, but I think it's not important for me, because [I] understand after listening, [and] if I don't understand what they want, it's OK. After being the ELP student, I have to write down [what I hear], so it's useless.

Student 9 was unhappy with having to read scholarly articles from professional journals and was quite open in saying that the ELP did not suit her purpose and she was not aware of this until she actually entered the program. She said:

> I just thought when I was in Korea, I just thought, "OK, there are some programs for learning English"—that was what I knew before [I came to Canada]. But when I came here, I realize this ELP is just for students who want to go to university and listening lecture[s]. All of [the] stuff are [*sic*] focused on listening [to] lecture[s] or debating or kind of university stuff. I'm already a university student, so I just want to learn English, so it's a bit different from my purpose.

Clearly, it is counterproductive to make students develop skills that they will in all probability never use again for the rest of their lives. The solution would be to have two streams: the academic and the nonacademic.

Even within the academic stream, however, there would have to be substreams. It should be noted that the academic fields represented in this study (Business Administration, Accounting, and Computer Science) all require different, though occasionally overlapping, academic skills. In Accounting and Computer Science, the need for highly developed public speaking skills is minimal as is the need for exceptional writing skills, whereas these skills are certainly needed in Business Administration. It is hardly surprising, then, that Student 2, who intends to study Computer Science, found the activity of writing research papers "least helpful," and was not pleased with the amount of attention given to vocabulary in the reading class. He complained that his reading teacher "never teaches us reading skills. She just teaches us vocabulary." He said, "Actually, I don't like vocabulary," a comment that is in keeping with his interest in Computer Science, where the need for a rich and varied vocabulary is minimal. Beyond

the narrow range of fields represented in this study, there are dozens more, each with its own unique needs and each requiring specialized communication skills. The most efficient way to meet the varying needs of the broad cross-section of learners is to offer courses in English for Special Purposes. The ELP administrator who was interviewed for this study spoke to this issue, and the topic will be discussed further when her interview is analyzed below.

Finally, the purpose for which one studies a language is closely associated with one's motivation and one's attitude to the language and to learning it. Those who see English merely as a means to an end (getting a "good" job) are less interested in developing true fluency in the language than in getting a high score on the test. (One Korean student, Student 12, said: "I … cried because my score was so terrible."). It is enough for them to do well on the test so that they can present the score to whoever requires it (the prospective employer) and then get on with their lives. Having such students in the same class as those who are serious about improving their skills changes the class dynamics and actually makes it more difficult for the serious learners to achieve their goals. This is another reason why students may feel that their needs are not being met. The administrator who was interviewed for this study alluded to the challenges posed by having students with different goals and purposes in the same class, and her remarks in this regard will be discussed later in the chapter.

The foregoing analysis of the students' purpose in coming to Canada highlights the diversity of purposes among the student population in the ELP and the consequent need for a program structure and curriculum that reflect this diversity.

Evaluating the Teachers and their Teaching Methods, Styles, and Performance.

An important part of the second language learning process is the relationship between the learner and the instructor. This relationship involves the amount of confidence that the learner has in the instructor's ability to provide high quality instruction, the amount of "faith" that the learner has in the effectiveness of the teaching methods that the instructor uses. Nine aspects of this relationship are discussed below.

Native English speakers vs. non-native English speakers. An issue that was addressed very specifically in the student interviews (since it was raised in of one of the predetermined questions), was the desirability of having non-native English speakers as teachers as opposed to native English speakers. A majority of the students questioned (8 out of 17) expressed a preference for native speakers. However, a surprising number (4 out of 17) said they would like to have both native and non-native speakers, and an almost equal number (3 out of 17) said it did not matter to them whether their teacher was a native speaker or not. Two of the students in the group said it depends and provided some criteria. These data and a summary of each student's comments are presented in tabular form in Table 19.

Some important patterns emerge from the data. First, non-native speakers were preferred for rule-based learning such as might occur in grammar and writing, whereas native speakers were preferred for the more global approach to learning of the kind that occurs in listening, speaking, and reading. It was noted that native speakers tend to be less analytical about their own language because they grew up speaking it and acquired it naturally, but this may not always be an advantage. In response to other questions in the interviews, it emerged that some teachers who are native-speakers lack the seriousness and rigour of their non-native speaker counterparts. Student 4, for example, complained

Table 19

Preference for Native English Speakers and Non-native English Speakers as Teachers

Student	Prefer native English speakers	Prefer non-native English speakers	"It depends"	"doesn't matter"	Both	Comments
1				X		Non-natives must have good knowledge of English; no accent
2	X					Non-native not good
3	X					Pronunciation and intonation not like native speakers
4	X					Different ways of thinking are a plus
5					X	Non-native first; native speakers for more advanced levels
6	X					With non-native speakers, tend to speak own language
7					X	Natives for speaking, listening; non-natives for grammar, reading
8					X	Natives for speaking, listening, writing; non-natives for grammar
9			X			Both have strong and weak points; non-native: more empathy
10					X	Natives can teach slang; non-natives good at grammar
11	X					Better pronunciation; better knowledge of vocabulary and idioms
12			X			Non-native: passionate, empathetic; native: some can be boring
13	X					Native: listening, speaking, reading; non-native: grammar, writing
14	X					Native: error correction; Non-native: lack confidence
15				X		Non-native: explanation good; pronunciation not good
16				X		No difference
17	X					Native: good pronunciation and vocabulary (but both are OK)
TOTAL	8	0	2	3	4	

that one of his teachers, a native speaker, wasted most of the class time telling jokes and actually taught his students very little. In a similar vein, Student 9 said: "Sometimes they [the teachers] look just lazy, … just laughing and joking with students. I think especially after reading week until final exam, they're just more easier [*sic*]—they just want to let the time goes [*sic*] by." Student 12 complained that one of her "Canadian" teachers for speaking lacked proper teaching skills and classroom management skills. Student 2 said that one of his concerns about learning English in the ELP was that some of the teachers were Korean and Japanese. Second, the most frequent reason cited for not preferring non-native speakers was that their pronunciation and accent were not standard. However, many students saw this drawback as being more than compensated for by other, more positive qualities, such as good knowledge of grammar and the ability to explain things clearly. Third, the most frequently cited reason for favouring non-native speakers was their ability to empathize with their students, since they themselves were once ESL students and they could understand what the students were going through and could speak to their problems more precisely. Fourth, the most frequently cited reason for preferring native speakers was that they had a practical, colloquially-based knowledge of the language, that is, they had a better command of vocabulary, idioms, and slang.

These patterns indicate that the ESL learners in this study had a good sense of their needs and which kind of teacher could best meet these needs.

Pacing. The issue of pacing does not come up often in discussions of second language teaching, but it is certainly an issue that deserves more attention, if we are to take seriously the feedback provided by the students in their interviews. Pacing refers to the pace or speed at which new material is introduced to the learner. From the comments made by the students, it would appear that in the ELP, the pace is sometimes too fast, at

other times too slow. Student 12, for example, commenting on her speaking teacher, said: "He required many things—many, many things—so sometimes it was hard to follow." This criticism was echoed by Student 9, who said:

> Last term I had lots of complains, especially in the speaking class, because he [the speaking teacher] always prepared a lot of things for our speaking, but it's too much for 50 minutes. … [The] teacher always talks to us [*sic*], 'Let's do this,' and after 5 minutes, 'OK, move to other projects, move to other topics.' So we don't have enough time to talk [to] each other.

Student 4 put it in a different way: "Sometimes the schedule is so busy so the teacher has to finish the schedule, so even maybe you have no time to express yourself." And in regard to the listening class, he said: "Least helpful … maybe the teacher gives you too much listening." A similar complaint was voiced by Student 11 in connection with the reading class:

> I don't like the teacher—[the] way the teacher teach[es] us …. [He] was giving us the assignment about the vocabulary and [he told us] just finish the vocabulary … according to the context and when we get the vocabulary and find it in the article … [we should] just read the sentence, but I haven't read the whole article. Actually, I have never read the whole paragraph [i.e., I didn't finish reading even one whole paragraph] and he just finished the assignment [i.e., he ended the activity]—that's it.

Clearly, for these students the pace is too rapid. The students need more time, but the teachers in question either do not recognize this or do not care, and move on to something else.

At the other end of the spectrum, there are teachers who linger too long on one activity (and the students get bored), or they do not present enough new material in any given class (and the students get frustrated because they are not learning enough). Student 4 was quite vocal about this when he said: "I think here [in Canada] sometimes one class [is] 45 minutes [but] you can learn nothing about the writing skills …. They [the teachers] just told you something about funny things and something like that. You can learn very little." Student 9 was also quite vocal about the slow pace of some of her classes. She said:

> Sometimes I think, "OK, that's enough and let's move to another lecture." … But sometimes she [the teacher] said to us, "OK, let's listen one more [time]" again and again, so sometimes it's boring. I have already got all the information in the lecture, but she said, "OK, let's listen again."

If the instructor has a specific purpose in making the students listen to something again, this purpose needs to be made clear to the students so that they know what they have to listen for; otherwise, they will feel that they are wasting their time listening again for no reason. Whatever the case, in all the instances cited above, the flow of activity and new information was too slow for the students, and this left them feeling frustrated.

If the ELP is to meet the needs of its students, its instructors will need to be more sensitive to the pacing of their lessons. To do this, they will need to watch for the reactions of the students. Students may be either too polite or too intimidated to complain openly in the classroom about the rate at which the lesson is progressing, but their facial expressions and body language will provide subtle clues that can give the instructor a sense of whether to slow down or speed up.

Capturing and maintaining the students' interest. The instructors' ability to capture and maintain interest in the classroom received mixed reviews. On the positive side, Student 6 said she liked her speaking teacher because the class was always lively with discussions. However, Student 13 seems to have had a different experience in the speaking class; she said: "Speaking, I think they should organize some activities that can … get our attention." For some students, it was not the teacher's teaching methods or activities so much as the textbook that was instrumental in holding or not holding their attention. For example, Students 1 and 2 specifically said that the textbooks were interesting. However, not all the students agreed with this assessment. Student 7 said: "I think just get a speaking book like 'How are you?' 'How do you do?'— this is boring" He also said: "The least helpful is [to] follow [a] book like how to write cause and effect and it's boring." In a similarly critical vein, Student 15 said: "Reading a book is boring for me, so I think reading from the Internet, read[ing] some articles or stories online and search[ing] from yahoo.ca and read[ing] the news or read[ing] some novels—it will improve your reading." These comments make it clear that the materials used in the classroom play a major role in capturing and holding the students' interest. The more closely related the material is to their lives and the more authentic it is, the more interesting it is likely to be.

Another factor that was seen to contribute to loss of interest was the level of difficulty of the material used. Student 8 indicated that she loses interest when the listening activities were over her head. She said: "If you can only understand 50% or maybe less, it will not be helpful for you because when you listen to something you cannot understand [it], [and] you will fall asleep." Student 17 echoed this concern: "… I sometimes I don't understand the lecture, what it is talking about, so I can't take notes."

For these students, the level was too high, but for others in other classes it was too low. Student 12 said: "About the pronunciation class, we have [it] one time per one week. It was so, so boring. The level was so down [i.e., low]. I know it [pronunciation] is very important … [but] it was like a waste of my time …."

Several students were critical of the teaching methods used in their classes. Student 11 said: "Sometimes the teacher will read. In our writing textbook there are many articles. The teacher will read it and will read by himself and we look at the book and I almost fall asleep." A similar complaint was voiced by Student 17, with a slight variation: "I hear [that in] some class[es], [the teacher] just let[s] the students reading [*sic*] the book, and [for] the whole class [the students are] just reading, just reading books and the teacher just teach[es] you some vocabulary." Clearly, this instructor was not getting the attention of his students by reading aloud from the textbook. Similarly, Student 12 complained of another instructor:

> Even though he was a writing teacher but his class was like a listening class because he wanted to talk and talk to us for one hour. We have to be careful, try to be careful [i.e., pay attention]. Sometimes, I was preoccupied [i.e., my mind began to wander]. I just sit down and want to sleep.

In both cases, the instructional approach was one that emphasized passivity on the part of the learner, and this made them lose interest easily. Other instructors appear to have gone to the opposite extreme and left the students to fend entirely for themselves. Student 17 said of his writing teacher: "The teacher just asks us to read the book and gives some advice and just explains. When I ask him how to write an essay, he just says, 'You just look in the book and write.'" This student found himself out of his depth and asked his

teacher for help, but did not receive it. This contrast in teaching styles highlights the issue of how much passivity or involvement on the part of the student is needed for the learning to be effective. At either extreme, the learner may lose interest, and this in turn may lead to a loss of motivation.

Another aspect of teaching method that contributes to loss of interest is slow pacing. The issue of pacing has already been analyzed under a separate heading. Here it should be noted that if learning does not proceed at the pace expected by the students, they will rapidly lose interest. Furthermore, repetition of an activity, if it is perceived by the learners to be unnecessary, will also cause them to become bored. Student 9 complained that having to listen to the same lecture again and again is boring. In the section that addressed pacing, it was noted that if an activity it repeated, the instructor needs to make sure that the students understand why the activity is being repeated and that they have a clear idea of what they should be paying attention to the second time around. Here it might be added that if the students do not know why they are doing a particular activity, it may seem to them like a waste of time, and they may consequently lose interest.

What emerges from this analysis is that instructors need to engage their students actively in the classroom, make sure that they understand the purpose of the activity and what it is they are supposed to do, and use materials that are authentic, level-appropriate, and relevant to the students' lives.

Error correction and feedback. Error correction and feedback were two related issues that received a tremendous amount of coverage in the interviews, and the opinion was unanimous that "feedback is a good idea" (Student 15). As with maintaining interest, the instructors received mixed reviews in this area, though the comments were generally

positive. Many of these positive comments were in regard to the feedback that the students receive in their writing class. Student 14 summed it up best when she said:

> And I think the most helpful [thing] is [when] we write something and the teacher give[s] us suggestions and correct[s] our mistakes and then the teacher label[s] the mistakes and ask[s] us to correct [them] and then we get back to the teacher and then the teacher correct[s our writing] again.

Student 6 and 7 both echoed these positive sentiments; Student 7 commented: "It's very helpful. Often he [the teacher] just marks the mistakes and you need to correct it [*sic*] by yourself." Student 11 added further insight into the process: "I always read it [the feedback] carefully and if I cannot understand [it], I will ask a teacher." The process of *self-correction* followed by further feedback and discussion between the teacher and student received high praise from several students. Student 14, who was quoted at length earlier on this topic, went on to expand on this theme:

> And also the teacher should give us example[s] like: "Oh, this one is good," and also like, "This sentence is very good." And, "When you write, you can use adjective or use adverb after verb," and something like that, and like a beautiful word or important word, "Don't use the same word all the time."

There was some disagreement among the students as to whether the teachers accompanied their error correction with an explanation for the correction. Student 2 and Student 16 said that their writing teacher *did* provide explanations, but Student 5 insisted that "they [the teachers] just correct our mistakes but they do not explain why. It does not help. And why we need to correct those sentences this way." This draws attention to the fact that error correction by itself is not enough. From the students' point of view,

feedback must include an explanation of why the error is wrong and why the correct form is right.

However, even when error correction is accompanied by explanations, it may not have the desired effect of improving the students' writing skills. Student 1 raised this issue when she said: "They [the teachers] all corrected the grammar, writing structure, and something like spelling, but writing is just difficult. They can't explain [it] well to us because it all depends on your personal knowledge." What this student seems to be saying is that error correction is ultimately not effective in getting the students to write *well*. She recognized that writing is not simply about getting the grammar and spelling and the structure of the essay right. Writing is about ideas, and the *content* of the written work is as important as its *form*. Formally correct writing may still be poor writing. Furthermore, a student may master the formal aspects of writing and still find writing difficult, as Student 1 realized. The writer must have something to write about, something worthwhile to *say*. Student 4 was right on the mark when she said: "I think if you can write something you must know the English knowledge [i.e., general knowledge about the Western world], so [in] your life every day, you can learn some knowledge so you have something to write about." It is not entirely unexpected that the students in this study expressed these sentiments. All of them come from the Far East (China, South Korea, and Taiwan) and, consequently, have educational backgrounds in which textbook learning is emphasized and broad-based general knowledge, independent thinking, and personal opinions are discouraged. Student 4 acknowledged this succinctly when he said: "Maybe different country has different educational style …" (though he was speaking in a different context). This factor needs to be taken into account when developing an approach to teaching writing in the classroom. It is all too easy for North American ESL

instructors to assume that their students have something to say and the general knowledge to back up it up. Student 4 expanded on her theme as follows:

> Maybe the most helpful [thing] is you learn all kind of things from others, you learn a lot of social experience and the native people['s] living habits and something else and you get all the information from different directions so you have something to write about.

In addition to "learn[ing] … things from others," reading was cited as the best way to prepare oneself for writing. Several student in the study (Students 1, 2, 5, 11, 13, 15, 16) cited reading as the "most helpful" activity in improving written English. This raises the issue of *integrated skills*, which will be discussed in greater detail below under a separate heading in this section, and it will be addressed once again, when analyzing the data from the instructors' interviews. Here it is sufficient to say that comments such as "You can learn writing from reading" (Student 16), "The most important thing is just improve your reading" (Student 15), and "Writing is based on reading," suggest that these two skills need to be taught in tandem, with reading providing the "fodder" or stimulus for writing activities, and that error correction, as important as it is, is merely an adjunct or ancillary to the teaching of writing.

Not all the students were satisfied with the quality and quantity of error-correction and feedback they received. Student 9 had this to say: "Some teachers just give you a checkmark. It's not good. Some teachers will write a paragraph of what kind of problem you have and where you can improve." She clearly favoured the more in-depth kind of feedback. She expanded on her experience as follows:

> The least helpful thing, yes, actually I wrote lots and lots of essays and submitted [them] to him [her writing teacher], [but] he didn't give the feedback as much as I

> expected. I'm always curious how much I improve. What is my weak point, I want more feedback from him but he always said to us, "It's really good," "It's really good," "I know what you mean," "It's really good"—just like that, so I think it's just not enough.

Student 14 echoed this frustration in almost exactly the same words:

> The least helpful is when you write something, [and] the teacher don't [*sic*] correct it—just check it [i.e., put a check mark]. 'Oh, it's a good structure.' 'It's good. I can understand your sentence.' 'Oh, that's fine.' I think it's not [a] good [way to teach].

Clearly reflected in these remarks is the North American teacher's reluctance to be critical of a student's work for fear of causing discouragement and doing damage to the student's self-esteem. As the comments quoted above show, such thinking is clearly misguided in the context of adult ESL. These students *want* to be corrected. They are not looking for a boost to their self-esteem. They know when the teacher is giving them false praise.

> However, being critical is not enough, as this comment from Student 12 shows: And the least helpful [was] when I was a level 3 student, the teacher pointed [out] many things that she does not understand what I mean, so I just try writing [it again], although [in] the Korean style, [using] Korean phrase[s]. [And] she just said "awkward sentence." She didn't change [it to] the new sentence that she [can] understand, so sometimes I read hers [i.e., her comments] and cried.

This student's frustration is plain to see: it reduced her to tears. (It is important to note that she was no mere teenager just out of high school; she was 26 years old at the time and had worked for several years in Korea before coming to Canada to study English).

The message here is that feedback of the "awkward sentence" type is simply not good enough. For feedback to have any value, it must provide the student with some form of guidance: in this case, how to make the sentence less awkward or remove the awkwardness completely. In the case of Student 12, the teacher needed to spend some time with her individually to determine (by asking appropriate questions) exactly what she was trying to say and then help her to express that idea in English using English categories of thought in place of her "Korean phrases." Of course, it is recognized that logistical considerations, such as class size and time limitations, may inhibit this.

Finally, in terms of teaching writing, peer feedback received a "thumbs down." Student 10 declared: "The least helpful is the student's feedback, because I like teachers' feedback. I just hope [they] can help me more with this." It should be noted that one instructor spoke highly (in his interview) of the effectiveness of peer feedback, and his comments will be analyzed later, along with the rest of the data from the instructors' interviews. Here it is sufficient to say that student perceptions of what works well and what does not may be quite different from the instructor's perceptions. Instructors must be careful not to become too complacent about their own perceptions of "success" in the classroom.

In terms of teaching speaking, the instructors received largely negative evaluations for error-correction in the speaking class. Student 14 said: "... I think sometimes when we speak in class, even [when] we make a mistake, the teacher[s] won't correct our mistake. [They just say,] 'Yeah, just speak.' They don't correct [us] because it's difficult and the teacher cannot correct every people's [*sic*] mistake when we speak." Student 5 was not so understanding; he *expected* his speaking teachers to correct his errors more often. He said: "They [the teachers in the speaking] can talk to us more and

when we speak English not correctly, they can correct us." Student 11 said that her speaking teacher corrected her pronunciation only "sometimes."

Overall, when it came to error correction in general, the students appear to have had greater confidence in instructors who were native English speakers than in those who were non-native speakers. Student 14 said:

> I would like to study with native English speakers because they can help you. They correct you and they can say, 'Oh, your sentence is wrong. Use this one.' But with non-native speakers, [they say,] 'Oh, I think so. It's right.' 'Oh, yeah, I think it's right.' 'If you are not sure, just ask another teacher.' [They] just [say,] 'I think so.'

This fits with other comments quoted above in the discussion on the preference for teachers who are native English speakers versus those who are non-native speakers. There it was noted that non-native speakers were preferred for grammar and reading (and possibly writing), but native speakers were preferred for speaking and listening.

The foregoing analysis of the students' views on error-correction highlight an important aspect of the language learning process that is missing from Krashen's (1982) Monitor Model discussed in Chapter Two. The model postulates the existence of a "monitor," which serves a "self-correcting" function. What the model fails to include is a mechanism by which this monitor is activated. The comments of the students in this study show quite clearly that this mechanism is in fact the constant and relentless error-correction that is provided by instructors. The students showed that they were highly motivated to correct themselves, but in many cases they did not know how, or were not aware that they had made an error. A learner can engage in self-correction only if he or she is aware that there is something that needs to be corrected. The data analyzed above

would indicate that this awareness is created by external error correction. External correction, if carried on persistently, can eventually trigger internal correction. Instructor-initiated error correction, then, is the mechanism that will activate the learners' internal monitor and this, then, is the missing piece that is needed to round out Krashen's Monitor Model.

Classroom activities. The students in the study presented a wide range of classroom activities that they found helpful and unhelpful. The following were mentioned as helpful activities:

- discussions (Student 6)
- debating (Student 9)
- group work (Student 14),
- games (Student 16)
- conversations—two students; student and teacher (Students 16, 17)
- essay writing (Students 3, 7, 17)
- journal writing (Student 17)
- summary writing (Students 14, 17)
- listening to lectures (Students 7, 8, 9, 13, 16, 17)
- note taking (Student 11, 13, 16, 17),

One student (Student 8) was particularly enthusiastic about an activity in her reading class that she found especially helpful and described at length:

> One of my teachers use[s] a very good activity [to] help us remember the vocabulary. She lists a list of vocabulary and just gives one or two student to think about the vocabulary and do … some acting and say a word, but don't say the

> meaning. But you have to show other students the meaning of this word. We always see the acting—the word is not just only a word. We can remember the acting and from the acting, we can remember the meaning of the word. It's very helpful for me even [though] it takes a bit of time.

In the "unhelpful" category, the students listed several activities and teaching methods or strategies that did not work well for them. These will be discussed under three areas: (a) Speaking, (b) Writing, and (c) Reading.

Speaking: Student 13 voiced the general feeling of the students in the study when she said: "Speaking, I think they should organize some activities that can encourage us to speak more — the topics and get our attention." Student 3 implied that the activities in her speaking class were not appropriate for a speaking class when she commented: "Actually I didn't like my speaking class because my teacher didn't give us a chance to speak English—we didn't have a chance." Student 1 echoed this criticism in regard to her Level 3 speaking class, but contrasted it with her Level 4 speaking class, the activities *were* helpful:

> Actually, my experience in my Level 3 [was] not very good about speaking because I don't think it's helpful for me, I don't think it's like a speaking class because the teacher speaks a lot. And Level 4, the teacher gives us lots of assignments like we have to interview a Canadian on campus and we have to make a speech in front of the class so before that, all these things we have to prepare a lot so it helps.

Student 9 similarly complained about not having a chance to speak in the speaking class but also raised a broader issue when she commented that there are too many activities crammed into one class. She said:

> During the speaking class last term, I had lots of complaints, especially in the speaking class, because he [the teacher] always prepared a lot of things for out speaking but it's too much for 50 minutes. We don't have many opportunities to talk [to] each other or debate other friends. Just we have to listen to [the] teacher, even [though] it's [a] speaking [class]. We don't have any opportunities to talk with them, even much less than [in] other class[es]. That's the big problem, I think.

Writing: Student 13 indicated that the activities in the writing class were not helpful to her since the quality of her writing had not improved as a result of doing them. She said:

> I think [my] writing is not improved by more teachers taught us because the teacher always taught us the same thing—just like [the] introduction, we should to [*sic*] have [a] hook, [a] thesis statement .... From very early, I've already [learned] about that, so I don't think in writing class I can learn something new. I think maybe they should change writing teaching style.

Student 5 voiced a concern that reflects very much the academically-oriented focus of some of the students, who tend to get impatient with non-academically-oriented activities:

> I think the book review is not that good. ELP asks us to do the book review every week but I think reading the book for the book review is not helpful. Compare[d]

> to read[ing] those books, I'd better read some academic articles because it will be good for us for later study.

Reading: Student 7 made the following general criticism in regard to the activities in the reading class, without getting into specific details: "The least helpful is I think the teacher teach[es] us some reading skills that it's not so helpful—sometimes it's helpful but not all the time." Student 2 was more specific about the activities that she thought were not helpful: "My reading teacher—nobody thinks she is good—just vocabulary, quiz, vocabulary, quiz. She never teaches us reading skills. She just teaches us vocabulary."

From this analysis, the general consensus that emerges is that the students find several classroom activities helpful, but some fine-tuning is necessary to make sure that the activities fit the needs of the students and that they are appropriate to the skill that is supposed to be the focus of the class.

Level-appropriate communication and instruction in the classroom. Some students felt that the teachers were talking down to them and communicating at a level that was below the students' abilities. Student 13 spoke of this at some length:

> The least helpful, maybe I always—in class, in the ELP, [the] teacher just speaks very simple English because they know ELP [students] are not familiar with their common spoken English. They just want to adjust to us so because—I mean, I am in level 5. I almost can understand all of what they say. They can use different and new words for us because I have studied 3 semesters [in the ELP] and they have used almost the same [level of English]. I can't stand that.

She also commented in another part of the interview that "the least helpful [aspect of the reading class], I think maybe just read ELP book[s] … because every ELP books are simplified." Student 12 echoed this criticism in talking about pronunciation. She said: "About the pronunciation class, … the level was so down [i.e., low]."

Confidence in the teachers' teaching abilities. As noted above in the section on the issue of native English speakers vs. non-native English speakers, some of the students implied that they had greater confidence in native-English speakers than in non-native English speakers, especially when it came to the teaching of speaking, pronunciation, vocabulary, and idioms. The lack of confidence in non-native speakers appears to have been generated by the way they answered the students' questions. Student 14 addressed this issue specifically. He observed: "With non native speakers, [the students get answers such as] 'Oh, I think so it's right,' [or] 'Oh, yeah. I think it's right.' If you are not sure just ask another teacher, [don't] just [say] 'I think so.'" Another behaviour on the part of instructors that did not inspire confidence among the students was the instructor's telling the class that something was all right when it was obvious to the students that it was not correct. Student 2 addressed this issue as follows: "I had a … [non-native] teacher last term, and it [the students' performance in general] was terrible, and she said, 'OK, OK.'" Finally, inexperience and lack of self-confidence in the instructor is easily picked up by the students and this undermines their confidence in that instructor. Student 13 spoke to this issue: "Speaking class, Level 5 speaking is not good. Maybe because the teacher is new so it shows he don't [*sic*] know how to teach us."

It hardly needs mentioning that it is important for the students to have confidence in their instructors. Dörnyei (2001b) has identified the personality, commitment, competence, and teaching methods of the teacher as the leading cause of "demotivation"

among second language learners. Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) cite an abundance of research done in Japan and elsewhere that corroborates Dörnyei's findings. To address the issue of student confidence in their teachers, perhaps regular classroom observations by the program coordinators (or administrators) might be introduced to identify those instructors for whom this is a problem so that the coordinators can work with them to remedy the behaviours that are undermining the students' confidence in them.

Use of textbooks in the classroom. Through the course of the interviews, there were various complaints about how teachers used—or did not use—textbooks in the classroom. Student 7 said that in his speaking class, the teacher did not "use the book very often" and played "only games." Student 9 corroborated this claim and spoke on it at considerable length:

> Actually, all of the textbooks, first time, all of them are really expensive and I think the textbooks are really good. It's really easy to understand, but I want to complain about the kind of attitude of the teacher using textbooks because we spent a lot of money to buy the textbooks but teachers didn't finish all of the books—just half, or you know. To me, it's a kind of waste of money.

This is a criticism that needs to be taken seriously since it raises an ethical issue: How fair is it to the students to require them to buy an expensive textbook and then use only half of it? It may, of course, not be the fault of the instructor that only half the textbook is used. In the interviews with the teachers, it became apparent that the speaking textbook was virtually unusable, and this may account for what Student 9 was complaining about (although she herself felt that the textbooks were "really *good*"). Since textbook selection in the ELP is not in the hands of the instructors, there is very little they

can do to remedy the situation. Nevertheless, they have a certain responsibility toward the students to ensure that the students get their money's worth out of the program.

However, Student 9 had a different criticism in mind when she complained that only half the textbook was used. She went on to say immediately following the comments quoted above: "Sometimes, they [the teachers] look just lazy, they just take a time to, you know, kind of just laughing and joking with students. … They just want to let the time goes [*sic*] by." This, of course, raises another ethical issue. From the students' point of view, it is imperative that the instructors be seen to be acting ethically and conscientiously in the classroom, whether it is in the context of the proper use of textbooks or anything else. Sometimes, the ethical nature of the issue may not be immediately apparent. When asked what was least helpful in the listening class, Student 11 replied: "Maybe just read[ing the] textbook and don't [do any] listen[ing]." Here again is an misuse of the textbook, though of a slightly different sort: it is excessive use of the textbook rather than not enough, to the exclusion of the activity for which the class was designed.

Textbook misuse by teachers takes on many different forms. For example, Student 17 complained: "The [writing] teacher just asks us to read the book and gives some advice and just explains. When I ask him how to write an essay, he just says, 'You just look in the book and write.'" Here the misuse lies in turning the textbook into a surrogate teacher. It seems that the instructor in this case is off-loading his job onto the textbook: he expects the students to learn to write by looking in the textbook, when it is really his job to teach them this skill.

The "surrogate teacher" tactic itself takes many forms. Student 11 commented: "Sometimes the teacher will read in our writing textbook … by himself and we look at

the book and I almost fall asleep." In this case, instead of asking the students to read the textbook themselves, the instructor reads it aloud and in this way off-loads his job onto the textbook. This is merely a variation of the previous form of misuse, and in fact it is worse, because it turns the students into passive listeners with nothing to do but follow along in their books.

This same student was not pleased with the way the reading teacher used the textbook either; she said: "For [the] reading class, I think our book is good but I don't like the teacher—[the] way the teacher teach[es] us …." She went on to explain that he assigns them work to do from the textbook on their own, and before they have had enough time to finish, he moves on to something else, without any discussion of the assignment just "finished." This kind of textbook use turns the textbook into a "babysitter," that is, something that will keep the students occupied during the class while he is absent in his role as instructor, even though he is physically present in the room.

This analysis has raised two issues from the students' point of view: (a) ethical behaviour on the part of the instructor, and (b) textbook misuse. These two issues are not mutually exclusive. Textbook misuse is certainly an ethical issue. However, from the students' perspective unethical behaviour on the part of the instructor undermines confidence in his or her authority in the classroom. Textbook misuse, in addition to being unethical, is simply bad pedagogy: the students do not get the kind of instruction that they need to advance their proficiency in the language and reach their goals.

Integrating skills in the classroom. The issue of whether skills should be taught in combination with each other was raised in the previous section, when discussing the relative merits of error correction in the teaching of writing. There it was noted that several students pointed out that reading and writing are inseparable. The conclusion to

be drawn from this is that these two skills need to be taught together. Similarly, public speaking (or presentations) and writing are also an inseparable pair, since speeches need to be written before they can be delivered. Thus, it is difficult for instructors to avoid mixing various skills when planning classroom activities. However, this mixing of skills is sometimes perceived by the students to be inappropriate. For example, when Student 6 was asked what was not helpful in her writing class, she said: "Presentation in the writing class. J---- [one of the teachers] gave us a process essay and then she asked me to talk about it in the class and give [a] presentation." Similarly, Student 12 complained about having to do writing in the listening class: "... The listening class required the note taking ... [and] I have to write down, so it's useless." Both of these students were upset about having to practice or use one skill in a class that was supposed to be focusing on another skill.

This perception on the part of the students is largely the result, it would appear, of the artificial division (in the ELP) of the language learning process into separate skill areas. No skill works in isolation from the rest and they can, therefore, not be taught in isolation. As noted above, in a speaking class, some amount of writing will be involved if the activity is making a speech in class. Dividing a language training program on the basis of language skills is not only counterintuitive, but it is also inefficient, since instruction will inevitably be duplicated. For example, writing skills that were presented in the writing class may end up being presented again in the speaking class when teaching the students how to write an effective speech. Such duplication is wasteful, and may, additionally, contribute to loss of interest on the part of the students. The implications here are that an effective language training program must take an integrative approach to the teaching of the various skills and the curriculum must be planned across

the board to avoid unnecessary duplication. A further discussion on the integration of skills will appear in the section devoted to the analysis of instructors' interviews.

Evaluating the ELP Program

In the systems approach to understanding phenomena, the entire system is an integrated whole with all the parts contributing to the overall effectiveness of the system. Applying this paradigm to the ELP, the program itself becomes one of the participants in the system and, therefore, needs to be evaluated. Here it will be evaluated in three areas: (a) Choice of textbooks, (b) Class duration, and (c) Class size and composition.

Choice of textbooks. The textbooks received mixed reviews. The students in the study seemed to be evenly split between liking them and not liking them. Nine students out of the 17 (Student 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 14, 15, 16) gave the textbooks a positive evaluation on the whole, using words such as "interesting," "fine," "good," and "challenging" to describe them. Two students (Students 10, 11) were lukewarm in their endorsement, saying that the textbooks were "OK." One student (Student 1) went so far as to say that they were "not useful."

Some of the students spoke specifically about the textbooks used for each of the five language areas (reading, writing, speaking, listening, and grammar) and gave them separate evaluations.

Reading. The rating was generally positive. Student 4 said: "I like [the] reading book because I can learn some unfamiliar words from it." Student 11 rated it as "good" and Student 17 gave it a less enthusiastic "OK." Even less enthusiastic was Student 7, who said that it "sucks," but softened the criticism by adding later that it is "not boring." Only one student (Student 16) was absolutely negative about it, but his criticism can

hardly be taken seriously. He said, "I hate my reading book because it's huge. It's so heavy."

Writing. In general, the students in the study did not have much to say about their writing textbooks. The two who did mention it gave it a negative evaluation. Student 7 said: "The least helpful is follow[ing a] book like how to write cause and effect, and [besides] it's boring." Student 11 said point-blank: "I don't like it"; and in response to another question, she said, "Sometimes the teacher will read in our writing textbook … by himself and we look at the book and I almost fall asleep." The last remark (about falling asleep) suggests that like Student 7, Student 11 finds the writing textbook boring.

Speaking. The speaking textbooks did not get a very hearty endorsement either. Students 11 and 17 evaluated the textbook they use in their speaking class with a non-committal "OK." Student 7's comment, when asked what he thought of his textbooks, was: "We don't use the [speaking] book very often …"; and in response to a different question, he said: "For the least helpful, I think just get[ting] a speaking book like 'How are you?' 'How do you do?'— this is boring."

Listening. The listening textbooks got generally positive reviews: Student 7 said it was "good," Student 17 said it was "challenging," and Student 11 gave it an "OK."

Grammar. The students expressed a wide range of opinions in regard to their grammar textbook, from Student 16s "really good" to Student 7s and Student 11s "OK," to Student 4s "not useful."

When this information is looked at across the whole range, it becomes apparent that there were some sharp disagreements on the usefulness of individual textbooks or the textbooks in general. For example, Student 17 offered this explanation about his listening textbook, which he found too difficult: "… sometimes I don't understand the lecture,

what it is talking about, so I can't take notes." Student 13, however, had the *opposite* criticism: "The least helpful, I think, may be just read[ing] ELP book[s]. [It is] not helpful because every ELP books are simplified the books of the original books. I heard—my cousin says he always improves his English use reading newspapers." Perhaps what she was trying to say here is that the textbooks do not contain authentic materials, and that the materials in the textbooks have been watered down too much. Student 15 echoed the need for authentic materials when he said: "Reading a book is boring for me, so I think reading from the Internet, read[ing] some articles or stories online and search[ing] from yahoo.ca and read[ing] the news or read[ing] some novels—it will improve your reading."

In the broadest possible terms, those students who gave their textbooks a favourable evaluation did so because they felt the textbooks were:

- challenging (Students 14, 15, 17)
- interesting (Students 2, 3)
- easy to understand (Students 8, 9)
- helped to increase their vocabulary and taught them idioms (Students 4, 8)

Those students who gave their textbooks an unfavourable rating did so because they felt the textbooks were:

- expensive (Students 9, 10)
- cumbersome—too heavy to carry around (Student 16)
- not useful (Students 1, 4)
- boring (Student 7, 11)
- not challenging enough (Student 13)

- have mistakes—sometimes (Student 10)
- too difficult to understand (Student 12)
- overly simplified, too easy (Students 4, 13)
- lacking in authentic materials (Students 13, 15)

There are some clear contradictions here that need to be accounted for. One explanation for the discrepancy is that three levels were represented in the study, and, therefore, there were three sets of textbooks being evaluated, one set for each level. Some students were probably evaluating the textbooks across all the levels they had been in. Others may have been evaluating the textbooks for their current level. Still others had not been in the program long enough to be in more than one level, so their evaluation was limited to just one set of textbooks. One student (Student 14) even took the trouble to mention the levels and do a level-by-level evaluation. She said: "Right now Level 4 textbook is challenging. It's not easy. But [the textbooks for] Level 2 is not good—I don't like [them]. Level 3 [was] OK. I like Level 4 better because it's challenging for you …." This would suggest that there is no consistency in the choice of textbooks across the levels, and that would account for the discrepancy. Another explanation is that even within a given level, the students have different needs and expectations based on their purpose in studying English and their individual learning style, as was discussed in detail in an earlier section. Thus, a given textbook may meet the needs of some students, but not of others. This raises the question of whether it is ever possible to have a textbook that will satisfy all the students equally.

Clearly, the choice of textbooks is a major problem in the ELP. This issue came up again in the interviews with the instructors, who also had reservations about some of the textbooks; their comments will be analyzed below. Here it should be said that from

the students' point of view, inappropriate textbooks can be a major "demotivator" in the L2 learning process (Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009). The only "textbooks" of any real and lasting value to an L2 learner would be a grammar handbook and a writer's handbook, which would be used as a reference guide while they were studying English and would have value even after they had completed the program and were using English on their own. There is an alternative to having a set textbook for each class. Instead of prescribing a textbook, the program would assist individual instructors in putting together their own package of materials drawn from various sources. As noted in a previous section, some teachers use only about half of the textbook, and this leaves the students feeling cheated. If materials were selected judiciously for their usefulness and put together to form a package, this problem could be avoided at least as far as the students are concerned. Not only would the package cost them less, but they would not feel they had wasted their money on something that was not fully used.

Class duration. A recurring theme in the student interviews was the shortness of the time available to the students during the class period. This issue came up particularly in reference to the writing and speaking classes.

In commenting on the writing class, Student 8 said: "Writing class, the time is limited so teacher usually gives you to do a part of papers like only the introduction or maybe just one body paragraph …." Student 15 had exactly the same complaint; she said: "It is just only one hour, so in the class when we write a paragraph, just introduction and one body [paragraph], so it's not enough time. I would like to have more time to write and practice."

The problem appears to have been even worse in the speaking class. Student 12 commented:

> In ELP there are 5 classes, but you know in the speaking class, we don't have enough time to speak English so I wish we had more time to speak English even though this is intensive English program but I don't think so about the speaking. That's why I look for a tutor.

The same concern was voiced by Student 3, who said of his speaking teacher: "Even [though] she gave us time to speak English, but it was short. I need more time." And in a similar vein, Student 11 said: "I need more time to talk to the teacher." Some of the teachers themselves appear to feel similarly pressed for time, cramming as much as possible into the 50 minutes allotted to them, much to the frustration of their students. Student 9 voiced this frustration as follows: "… [The] teacher always talks to us, 'Let's do this,' and after five minutes [says], 'OK, [let's] move to other projects,' [or simply] move[s] to other topics. So, we don't have enough time to talk each other." Student 4 expanded on this issue, focusing on the impact on the students, especially the less aggressive ones:

> Sometimes not everybody in every class have a chance to speak out during the class time, so if you are a person who is very shy, maybe you cannot get a chance to speak. Maybe you can get a chance, but sometimes the schedule is so busy so the teacher has to finish the schedule, so even maybe you have no time to express yourself.

It appears that both the students and the instructors were struggling with the problem of not having sufficient time. Clearly this is a problem that neither the students nor the instructors have any control over, since it is something that is handled at the administrative level. Hence, it is an issue for administrators to consider seriously. Student

12 (quoted above) raised the issue of whether it is fair to advertise the ELP as an "intensive English" program if the students are not given sufficient time to practice their speaking skills in class. The problem seems to be one of achieving intensiveness of *content* (aimed at maximizing *competence*) at the expense of intensiveness of *practice* (aimed at maximizing *performance*). In more general terms, this is the problem of how to strike a balance between quantity and quality without sacrificing either. One possible solution is to restructure the program in such a way that unnecessary duplication (discussed earlier in the section on integrating skills in the classroom) is eliminated.

Class size and composition. Closely related to the problem of class duration is the issue of class size and class makeup. Once again, these issues can be addressed only at the administrative level. However, it is important to register the concerns of the students on these two matters.

Class size is the obverse problem of class duration. Obviously, the larger the class, the longer the class duration required to allow every student a chance to speak. While the students in the study did not raise the issue of class size directly, it was implied in their complaint that there was not enough time for everyone to get a chance to speak. Clearly, if there were fewer students in the class, a 50-minute class period would be adequate for every student to have a chance to speak. The size-to-duration ratio needs to be worked out carefully for each type of class, and the ratio should be low for classes involving speaking.

A separate but related issue is that of class composition. The greater the number of students in the class, the more likely it is that one particular cultural or linguistic group will predominate. In the case of the ELP, the problem was that of having too many Chinese or Chinese-speaking students in one class. Several of the students in the study

brought up this issue of their own accord. Student 1, herself from China, had this to say: "We just have too many [Chinese] students and sometimes we can't help to speak Chinese." Student 14, another Chinese student, had this to say about what he called the "study environment" in the ELP:

> In the ELP, there are a lot of Chinese students, so I think maybe it's not good for [the] study environment for Chinese people because there are more chance[s] to speak Chinese and sometimes it's really hard for them to speak English because they always go together; [they] go out for dinner together and they live together, so except [for] the study time in class, the rest of the time, they speak Chinese all the time. I think this is a problem.

Another Chinese student (Student 11) expanded on this idea of the "study environment" and concentration is affected; he said: "Most of the classmates are Chinese and they don't want to pay attention to the study—just some gossips and other topics in Chinese." His observation was corroborated by Student 15, who commented: "In the classroom, the teacher speaks English; however, the students—most of the students—are from China and they did a lot of small talks [*sic*] in Chinese." Elsewhere in the interview, he returned to this problem, focusing specifically on the effect it has on the students:

> The least helpful [thing is] when I am in the class and the students speak Chinese and I think they could not learn anything. And when I heard their pronunciation, [it was] just totally broken. If they just keep speaking Chinese, they will combine Chinese and English together so the pronunciation and grammar are not good.

A fifth Chinese student (Student 7) provided this insight: "Based on the partners, Chinese, so if the same country, they talk less [in English]. If it's a Korean or [a student from] some other countries, [they] talk more." The Korean students in the study provided

their perspective on the problem in equally forceful language. Student 2 observed: "Most of my Chinese classmates did not use English; even if they are in class, they didn't use [it]. It makes [*sic*] me confused." And Student 12 had this to say about the changes that happened to her as a result of having so many Chinese students in her class:

> Actually the majority of our classmate[s] is from China. So the first time I couldn't understand what they [were] speak[ing] and what they want[ed], but now I understand what they want, so I am so accustom[ed] to understanding, but sometimes I follow [i.e., imitate] their pronunciation. I have a lot of Chinese [classmates] and I like them but I am a little bit worried about the accent. I thought my pronunciation was good before coming here, but after coming here, I have to speak English every moment so I don't care about my pronunciation [any more].

Given the repeated and spontaneous recurrence of this theme in the interviews, it can be concluded that it is a serious problem from the students' point of view, and it needs to be addressed by the program organizers and administrators on a program-wide scale. The issue of class size came up once again in the instructor's interviews, and the instructors' comments in this area will be presented and analyzed in the section on the instructors' interviews below.

Evaluating Course Content

In addition to evaluating their teachers and the program as a whole, the students provided informal evaluations of the content of their instruction during the course of the interviews. While their comments were wide-ranging, two major areas of concern emerged: (a) Vocabulary and idioms, and (b) Pronunciation.

Vocabulary and idioms. There was almost unanimous agreement among the students in this study that vocabulary is one of their major concerns and that it does not get nearly as much attention as they would like it to. As noted in the section on choice of textbook, one of the major reasons cited for liking a particular textbook was that it helped the students expand their vocabulary. And in the section on native speakers vs. non-native speakers as teachers, Student 11 and 17 were both cited as saying that they preferred native speakers because they had a better knowledge of vocabulary and idioms (see Table 19 above).

There were, of course, a few negative voices: Student 1 said that the textbooks were not useful because "I can only learn vocabularies [*sic*] from the book," and Student 2 said, "Actually, I don't like vocabulary" and said of his reading teacher that "nobody thinks she is good. [She teaches] just vocabulary, quiz, vocabulary, quiz. She never teaches us reading skills. She just teaches us vocabulary."

However, the vast majority of students in the study said they needed to increase their vocabulary and expressed appreciation for those teachers who took the time to teach them vocabulary, but at the same time indicated that they needed to work more on vocabulary building. Student 13 described her experience with vocabulary as follows:

> When I first arrive[d] in Canada, I feel [*sic*] very fresh and everything is fresh to me, and I try to keep every new words [*sic*] and when I encounter a new word, I just keep [it] in mind and try to figure out what their [*sic*] meaning [is] and everything is new for me. Because I think vocabulary is very important, because [it does] not matter [whether you are studying] … writing, reading, and/or speaking.

For these students, vocabulary was important, but it was also experienced as a problem. Student 1 said: "Vocabulary is a big problem, and I think idioms and phrases are [also] very important to us." Student 3 echoed this concern, saying that he wanted to learn "more vocabularies [*sic*] and some idioms." Student 8 declared that his "... only problem is vocabulary. When people say one vocabulary [*sic*] in one sentence, I just don't know what they are talking about." Student 11s concern was "to improve my vocabulary ..." and Student 16s concern was that "a lot of different vocabulary might be a future problem because what we are studying [we] will not even be using in the daily life." Student 14 identified the problem with vocabulary as follows: "I want to improve vocabulary. I know it's very difficult for you to remember a lot of new words—that's the problem." Another problem with vocabulary was that a limited vocabulary interfered with listening and reading comprehension. Student 17 said that his main problem with note-taking was that he was not familiar with the vocabulary used in the lecture.

The students offered several ways to deal with the problem of learning and remembering new words. Student 13 spoke highly of the value of the picture dictionary in learning vocabulary. Student 17 indicated that he studies vocabulary on his own by looking up words in the dictionary. Student 1 felt that reading was the best way to "accumulate more vocabulary" and to "guess when you don't understand some vocabulary." Student 5 said that the best way that students can improve their reading comprehension is by "enlarging your vocabulary," and Student 10, Student 12, Student 14, and Student 16 all echoed this sentiment.

Mixed feelings were expressed about how vocabulary is taught in the ELP. On the positive side, Student 12 said: "I needed a lot of vocabulary and that was what I learned." Student 8 spoke highly of an acting activity that one of the teachers used to help the

students remember new vocabulary items. Similarly, Student 13 praised her reading teacher because "when he teaches us prefix and suffix and rules, it's more easier [*sic*] for me to get the new words' meaning because there are some rules for us to guess the meaning." A strategy used by another teacher, however, got mixed reviews. Student 9 explained: "My teacher always said to us, 'Don't use [the] dictionary. Don't use any kind of dictionary, just guess.'" This student went on to say that she found this strategy "helpful." However, she also later added that the teacher gave her class reading passages from "professional magazines [i.e., scholarly journals], but it's really challenging—lots of vocabularies [*sic*] are very professional [i.e., specialized to certain professions]. Even if I improve my guessing, I really don't know what it means sometimes." This student showed far more insight into the vocabulary learning process than the teacher did. Discouraging students from using "any kind of dictionary" and encouraging them to "just guess" instead is an inadequate vocabulary strategy, even though it is widespread in North American ESL classrooms and has been embraced uncritically by ESL instructors. Folse (2004) identifies it as one of the eight great "vocabulary myths." As he points out in his very readable book, none of the few studies that have been done in this area provide any empirical evidence in support of the belief that guessing is a superior learning strategy to consulting a dictionary and, in fact, there is some evidence to suggest that dictionary use is more effective than guessing. From his survey of the literature on the subject, he concludes that guessing is a good *reading strategy* in some situations, but it does not contribute to *vocabulary building*. Student 16 said that he liked "the teachers who … explain the idioms and vocabulary." Student 17, however, complained that "the teacher doesn't explain vocabulary; because it wastes time to find the vocabulary in the dictionary, so the teacher should explain the vocabulary in the reading." Student 5 and

Student 11 thought it was a good idea to study English vocabulary in their home country before coming to study English in Canada. This was presumably because vocabulary got more attention in ESL classes there (China) than it did in the ELP.

These data show clearly that vocabulary is not given as much prominence as the students think it should in the ELP. One way to remedy this situation would be to have a special class in vocabulary building, in which students would learn vocabulary building strategies along the lines used by Student 13s teacher, who taught his students about prefixes and suffixes (and, presumably, roots as well) as a way of helping them to arrive at the meanings of unfamiliar words (and also as a means of remembering them.)

Pronunciation. Pronunciation was another area that received considerable attention, often mentioned in combination with vocabulary. For example, Student 11 said: "I want to improve my vocabulary and correct my pronunciation." Student 14 expressed a similar concern, adding: "This is my weak[ness] …." Student 12 worried that her pronunciation was getting worse under the influence of the Chinese students in her class, and no one was correcting her or them. This concern about the influence of the wrong pronunciation of others in the learning environment was also voiced by Student 14, who commented: "I think when I listen to some people speak English poor[ly] and whose English is not good, if I listen a long time so maybe I will follow the pronunciation in a wrong way too …" Student 15 likewise expressed concern about the poor pronunciation of his Chinese classmates, saying: "When I heard their pronunciation—just totally broken." Student 11 thought he could improve his pronunciation by imitating the teachers' pronunciation and indicated that his teacher corrects wrong pronunciation only "sometimes." Student 12 indicated that she had a pronunciation class once a week, but the level was very low and it seemed to her "like a waste of my time."

In the interviews with the instructors, the issue of pronunciation was raised once again, and one of the instructors suggested that there should be a separate class for pronunciation. This will be discussed in greater detail when the data from the instructors' interviews are analyzed. Clearly, the issue of teaching and correcting pronunciation needs to be given more attention in programs, such as the ELP, and needs to be addressed on an administrative level.

Proficiency Test Data

An additional source of information (of a quantitative nature) for this study was the scores on the proficiency test that IELTS students take upon entering and exiting a level. It was hoped that comparing entry and exit scores for each of the students would prove to be a useful line of inquiry. However, only 5 out of the 17 students in the study took both the entry and exit tests. The rest of the students chose not to take the exit test because:

1. It was the end of the term and they would be leaving the program and Canada when the term ended; or
2. They had been accepted into a university/college and did not need to continue in the program after the term ended.

The purpose of this analysis was to determine how effective the ELP instructions were that were provided to these students at their respective level. The analysis was intended to quantify the amount of improvement that had occurred in the students' English proficiency over the period of one term, after having received instruction in the ELP at their level. Given that less than one-third of the students in the study took both tests, the results of the analysis will be extremely limited in their validity. Nevertheless, some interesting patterns emerged in the analysis.

The scores of those who took both entry and exit tests are shown in Table 20.

As was expected, there was an increase in the scores on the exit tests of those who took it. What is of specific interest to this study, however, is the *amount* of this increase. The amount of increase is shown in Table 21. As the table shows, the amount of improvement in proficiency ranged from 14 points to 80 points—a rather wide range (66 points). In terms of percentage increase, this represents a minimum increase of 3.5% and a maximum increase of 20% with a mean increase of 13.5%. If these figures are extrapolated across the whole program, then at the rate of 13.5% per level, an increase of 81% can be expected across all six levels. Ideally, one term corresponds to one level, since the average student can be expected to complete one level in one term (14 weeks). If the program is running at maximum efficiency, increase in proficiency for someone who enters at the bottommost level should be close to 100% by the end of the program, and an increase rate of approximately 16.66% should be observed at the end of each 14-week term (as opposed to the 13.5% increase observed in this study, as noted above). What would account for the lag in the improvement rate?

There are two possible answers this question:

1. The students underperforming (i.e., performing below the expected level) for some unknown reason, despite the high quality of the instruction they receive;
2. The instruction provided by the program is inadequate to achieve higher rates of improvement per term.

Since there seems to be no plausible reason for the students to be underperforming, it must be concluded either that the program is structured in such a way that it cannot meet its own goals, or that the program is structurally sound but is not running at maximum efficiency. The qualitative part of this study will uncover some

Table 20

Scores on the Entry and Exit Tests of Five Students

	Type of Test and Test Scores			
Students	Entry Test	Score/400	Exit Test	Score/400
1	Fall yr 1	210	Spring yr 2	258
2	Winter yr 2	249	Fall yr 2	263
3	Fall yr 1	192	Fall yr 2	272
4	Fall yr 1	201	Fall yr 2	254
5	Fall yr 1	215	Spring yr 2	290

Table 21

Improvement in Proficiency Test Scores (in points and percentage)

	Test Scores			
Students	Entry Test	Exit Test	Increase in Score	Percentage increase in score
1	210	258	48	12.0%
2	249	263	14	3.50%
3	192	272	80	20.00%
4	201	254	53	13.25%
5	215	290	75	18.75%
Mean	213.40	267.40	54.00	13.50%

factors that may be contributing to these two possibilities, and these will be discussed below.

Another insight that emerges from an analysis of the proficiency test data relates to the wide range in the improvement rate. The lowest improvement rate was 3.5% (14 points on the proficiency test), whereas the highest improvement rate was 20% (80 points). It is true that the sample size (n=5) is extremely small, but this does not affect the spread that is present in the data in any significant way. It is also true that if the lowest increase rate (3.5%) is disregarded, the spread is not so great (12% to 20%). Nevertheless, there is still a wide disparity in improvement rates from one student to the next. How does one account for this wide disparity? Given that the participants in the study were from the same geographical regions (the Far East) and had a similar cultural and linguistic background, the disparity cannot be attributed to cultural and first-language differences. It must be concluded that the program itself is not sufficiently flexible to adjust to the specific needs of individual learners, and, in particular, is not sensitive to the needs of slower learners or learners whose progress may be impeded by low motivation, personal problems, or other factors. Some of these factors will be discussed further in the qualitative analysis later in the chapter.

It was noted earlier, in analyzing the data on level of self-confidence, that progress and self-confidence are intimately related. There it was noted that the overall self-confidence of the students in the study was fairly high (M=72.82%). It is interesting to note that 4 students out of the 17 rated their level of confidence at 90% in one or more of the five areas of language learning, and 5 out of the 17 had overall confidence ratings (across all five areas) of 80% or more. The question to ask here is whether the progress made by the students as seen on the proficiency test matches this high level of self-

confidence. From the analysis of the proficiency test scores just presented, it is clear that the progress of the students in the study lagged behind expectation, not just in terms of how much progress a student is required to make in order to complete each level in 14 weeks, but also in terms of the level of confidence that the students in the study claimed to have in their English language abilities. One way to explain this discrepancy would be to say that the students were overly optimistic about their level of confidence and over-rated themselves. Another way would be to say that the theory is not sound; that is, Krashen's (1982) "affective filter" does not always work as he described it. High levels of self-confidence do not appear to have produced high rates of progress in this case, and this would mean that affect has a somewhat more marginal role to play in progress in language learning than Krashen believed. A third possible explanation is that the proficiency test is not an accurate measure of the students' actual progress. Determining which of these three factors is at play in the anomalous relationship between progress and self-confidence would be an excellent goal for further research.

Analysis of Data from Instructors

Information was collected from the instructors through a face-to-face interview and by means of a questionnaire. Here, these data will be analyzed under three headings: (1) Background Data; (2) Interview Data; and (3) Questionnaire Data.

Background Data

There were six instructors in all, two male and four female. Not all the instructors were native English speakers: one was Asian, another European. This diversity was also reflected in the amount of teaching experience the instructors had, which ranged from 4 months to 10 years. Two had a graduate degree; the rest had an undergraduate degree. Many of them spoke a second and even a third language, and this gave them a good

understanding of what it is like to be a second language learner, an understanding that is necessary if they are to appreciate what their students are going through.

Interview Data

The interview data in this section were analyzed using cross-case analysis. The cross-case analysis involved organizing the responses of the six profiles, all of whom were instructors in the ELP. The responses were given in answer to a set of five open-ended questions. Additional questions were also asked for the purpose of clarification and for gathering further information about topics related to the main questions that emerged from the responses. The five main questions are listed below in the order in which they were asked during the interview. In referring to individual instructors, pseudonyms have been used to preserve anonymity.

Question 1: What language skills do you think your students find to be the most challenging in your classroom?

In response to the first question, the first two teachers provided considerable detail about how their students perform. Sarah finds that note-taking, inferring, and grammatical structures are the most challenging for her students, whereas Jim feels that pronunciation is the most challenging for his students, along with the skills of analysis and production.

Sarah presented an interesting perspective on learning language skills, namely, that the students do not actually *learn* these skills, but rather, *acquire* them; language skills came naturally to the student in his or her native language, so it is difficult to *learn* them in another language. The same is true for the teacher: it is difficult to *teach* language skills if the teacher acquired such skills naturally. Sarah said that she has difficulty teaching "… any kind of skill where I was never taught how to do it, so it was

very hard for me to teach somebody else. I have to do it because I don't remember learning it—[it's] just natural."

May finds that among the four language skills and grammar, speaking is the most challenging for her students. She has noticed that it is difficult for the students to see their own progress in their speaking. She also finds that teaching speaking is challenging for her as a teacher, especially when it comes to the evaluation of speaking. May's observation that it is difficult for the students to see their own progress in speaking is worth noting. Earlier in this chapter, reference was made on several occasions to the relationship between progress and self-confidence in terms of Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis. When students are not able to observe their own progress and have a sense that they are improving, they lose self-confidence. As noted earlier, this loss of self-confidence holds back progress even further, and the cycle goes on and on. It should be noted that May's observation about not being able to self-monitor progress in speaking does correspond to the data obtained from the students in regard to level of confidence and relative proficiency in the four language skills. Speaking consistently rated at the bottom of the scale. As Nunan (1999) has noted, lack of a sense of progress can lead to a decline in motivation, an issue that May (and other instructors as well) has faced and brought up in her interview. Nunan recommends that instructors develop ways in which learners can record and monitor their own progress. The next chapter will discuss some ways in which this can be done in regard to speaking.

Like May, Dan finds that speaking is generally the most challenging skill for his students, but he also pointed out that what students consider to be "the most challenging skill" varies from group to group and from individual to individual. He said:

> I think it really depends on the students, to tell you the truth. Different students are going to have challenges in different skill areas. I think with the group of the students that we have in the ELP, which are predominantly Chinese students, most of them are fairly high in writing skills and lower in speaking skills. So I think that we definitely have more speaking problems than we would have writing problems as far as language skills go, but even within one class, there is a very wide range of variation, I would say between the different students.

In Kate's experience, grammar is the most challenging aspect of language learning for her students, especially gerunds. Jen has had a similar experience, but for her students it is articles that present the most difficulty.

Question 2: What problems or difficulties with English do you encounter or observe among the learners in your classroom?

In response to the second question, Sarah said that in general the students tend not to use English as much as they should. When it comes to her writing class, she finds that her students have the greatest difficulty with understanding and following the structure of the English essay. For her grammar class, she noted that some of her students seem to be helped by the fact that they have already been taught some English grammar in their country of origin. However, if they have not already been taught a particular grammatical structure as part of their home-country language instruction, they seem to have more difficulty grasping the concept when she presents it for the first time. In her listening class, note-taking seems to present her students with the greatest difficulty.

As for Jim, he finds that his students struggle the most with applying what they learn in the classroom to real life outside the classroom or in noncontrolled conditions. For example, they get all the answers right on a grammar exercise, but they still make

grammatical errors when they speak spontaneously. He finds that they tend to focus on getting the correct answer without thinking (or caring) about why it is correct. He commented: "They [the students] can fill in blanks and get 10 out of 10, but when it comes to producing it accurately, the accuracy is weak in some cases."

May and Dan both agreed that the students' motivation has to be taken into account. May finds that if her students are not motivated, it is difficult for her as a teacher to help them with their problems, since the situation is beyond her control. It is her opinion that "... if they are not motivated at some point, or sometimes they are not motivated at all, then ... it's just hopeless for us to make them keep working." As for Dan, he pointed out that "students with very high motivation usually work harder and do better, but students who don't have a lot of motivation, they just come out and see how they can get by with them—that's it." Earlier on, in analyzing the data from the student questionnaires, it was noted that the students in the study (and, therefore, in the ELP as a whole) have instrumental motivation (rather than integrative motivation or social-group-identification motivation), as indicated by their responses to a question about how they intend to use English in the future. Given the fact that the students do have some form of motivation, it seems somewhat surprising that these two instructors have faced the problem of lack of motivation in their classes. One way to account for this anomaly is to say that perhaps their activities are directed at the other two forms of motivation, that is, they are aimed at social integration and group identification rather than at more utilitarian goals. Students who have instrumental motivation may not respond favourably to activities that try to get them to integrate socially or identify with native English speakers. In some cases, it may not be obvious that an activity is designed for social integration or group identification, and neither the instructor nor the students might be

aware of this, but it shows up nevertheless as an apparent lack of motivation on the part of the students. This suggests that instructors need to select their activities more carefully, with special attention to the underlying purpose of the activity. May appeared to be somewhat frustrated with the problem of motivation, as was evident from her comment: "… It's just hopeless for us to make them keep working." Dan too voiced a certain degree of frustration when he said, "They just come out and see how they can get by with them—that's it." It might be helpful for these instructors and others to differentiate between apparent lack of motivation and real lack of motivation. Students may appear to be unmotivated if the activities they are required to engage in seem irrelevant to their personal goals: this is apparent lack of motivation. This kind of "lack of motivation" may disappear when the classroom activities are adjusted to meet the students' needs or help them achieve their self-assigned goals. Ultimately, the best attitude to adopt is the one recommended by Lightbown and Spada (2004), who take the position that teachers should not try to motivate their students but merely provide a supportive environment in the classroom and leave the rest to the students themselves. Part of the process of providing a supportive environment is selecting materials and activities that will speak directly to the learners' personal goals.

The fact is that the students in the study actually showed a high degree of motivation in improving their English communication skills, especially their speaking and listening skills. Their motivation is seen most clearly in the self-directed learning that they undertake outside the classroom. Several of the students indicated that they avail themselves of learning opportunities in the wider community. For example, Student 13 said, "I just try every opportunity to improve my spoken English." For this student, "every opportunity" meant being a member of the English Café (an extracurricular

activity organized by the ELP) and attending Tuesday night meetings at a local church organized by a Canadian couple. Student 14 said she tries to engage native English speakers in conversation and watches TV. Student 7 watches TV without the subtitles. Student 17 goes to Tim Horton's and talks to native speakers. Student 10 likewise has conversations with native speakers outside the classroom. Student 12 is so highly motivated to improve her spoken English that at the time the study was being conducted she was looking for a private tutor who would help her with it. Thus, the instructors often have only a partial view of their students' total learning experience and thus misjudge them as not being motivated. Instructors usually see only the classroom persona of the student, and this persona may be very different from the persona in nonclassroom settings. A student may not be motivated to participate in classroom activities, but this does not mean that he or she is not motivated to improve his or her English skills.

Kate finds that speaking seems to be the most difficult aspect for her students. She explained in detail that her students

> could have a good knowledge of grammar and their writing could be very proficient, but [in] speaking they make a lot of errors, and even though they know that there are errors, … for some reason they can't seem to correct themselves. So speaking … [is] usually the biggest challenging problem and … if [their] pronunciation is not clear enough, then it can be very frustrating for the students and they can be very discouraged. And if people always ask them, "What do you mean? I don't understand"—that can be very frustrating.

She noted further that the students' first language has a marked influence on their pronunciation, and some students have a stronger accent than others.

Jen finds that the transition from ELP to university is a major hurdle for her students, who, apart from their language skills, are at an advanced level. She thinks that ELP has an obligation to ensure that its students are completely prepared to enter university when they exit the program. Her comment was: "Probably one of the difficulties for level 5 is just preparing for university. The transition—that transition from our program into university—I think it's necessary in order to prepare them properly."

Question 3: What specific strategies do you use to address the problems or difficulties with English that you encounter or observe among the learners in your classroom?

In response to the third question, Sarah indicated that initially she tried using negative reinforcement to force her students to speak more often in English. However, she found that while this worked in the short term, it was ineffective in the long term. She finally gave up trying. Her current attitude is that her students are adults and she cannot force them to do what they do not want to do. Those who make the effort to speak in English benefit from that effort; those who do not will not. This is how she described her experiment with negative reinforcement in dealing with the problem of L1 use by students during her class:

> I tried to do negative reinforcement and that worked for a while—writing their names on the board, giving more homework to the people whose names I put on the board, and that kind of cleared it up for a while, but then it started again. So I … tried giving speaking tickets, but to be honest at the end of this term, I just kind of gave up and ignored it. I was like the students who were speaking English, you know, that's great and the ones who didn't want to, I can't force them. They are adults.

It should be noted that the instructor might have had greater success if she had used positive reinforcement rather than negative reinforcement. That is, she might have tried rewarding increased use of English rather than punishing L1 use. She appears to have achieved better results with reinforcement in her writing class. Her strategy in her writing class is to keep reinforcing the same writing structures and rules. As for her listening class, she finds that repeated practice is the best strategy. Overall, she finds that competition is a useful strategy to get students to participate, and that the use of authentic materials makes the learning enjoyable and interesting, and this promotes participation as well. While Sarah appears to have had some success with motivating her students to participate through competitive activities and the use of authentic materials, she also appears to feel the same kind of frustration that May and Dan feel when dealing with the seeming lack of motivation they encounter in their classes (discussed above). Her frustration is evident in her comment regarding her attempts to get her students to speak more often in English: "… I can't force them. They are adults." As she indicated, she eventually gave up trying to get her students to stop using their first language in her classes and use English instead. This contrasts with data gathered from the student interviews, where at least 1 student expressed a wish that more would be done to get the students to speak in English. When asked what one thing the ELP could do to make the program more effective, Student 10 responded: "I think maybe they can do something that makes the students can speak English all the time because we just say, 'OK, I will speak English but next time,' [but] we just speak our own language." Perhaps, speaking tickets are not the solution, but giving up is not an option either. Clearly, the students want something to be done about the problem because they cannot do it themselves. Language is a habit, and slipping into one's first language is an unconscious process; in

keeping with the general nature of habits, it is spontaneous and involuntary (Student 1 said: "Sometimes we can't help to speak Chinese."). Even if the students are motivated to speak in English (and in this case many of them certainly are: Student 12 was so motivated that she was looking for a private tutor to help her with speaking), they may not be able to act in harmony with this motivation because of the force of habits formed earlier. The language learning process is in part a habit-forming process (Lado, 1964; Lightbown & Spada, 2004), and linguistic habits, like all other habits, can be formed and broken only in a highly structured environment with a high degree of regimentation (as is evidenced by the success of such highly structured regimens as the various Twelve-Step Programs). Free conversation and group work, while they have their merits, are not sufficiently regimented to bring about the habit breaking that is necessary for the second-language learner to use the second language consistently and avoid slipping unconsciously into the first language. New teaching methods will have to be found.

As for Jim, group work seems to work for his students. In addition, he tries to encourage the students in all his classes, but especially in his grammar class, to use their analytical skills to explain why they answered a question in a particular way or gave a particular response. In his writing class, he uses peer feedback as a way of getting his students to think consciously about the structure of the essay. As was discussed earlier in analyzing the data from the student interviews, the students were not as enthusiastic about peer feedback as Jim. There it was noted that Student 10 identified peer feedback as "the least helpful" aspect of the writing class. It was also noted there that perceptions differ, and that what the instructor may think is useful may not be seen as useful by his or her students.

Like Jim, May finds group work useful, but she uses it in a modified form. She has instituted a learning partner system, by which students are paired off and are required to work in those pair groupings, helping each other when needed and sitting together for all the five classes (Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening, and Grammar) for a 2-week period. The pair groupings are rotated every 2 weeks. In assessing the effectiveness of this strategy, May said: "I found that pair helping works."

Dan said that in his speaking class, he focuses on how to communicate meaning effectively rather than on grammatical correctness. He elaborated on his approach as follows:

> My approach to speaking is I don't think we [should] judge speaking on the same level as we judge writing as far as grammatical accuracy [is concerned]. I think in the speaking class, you just want to make sure that they [the students] are adequately prepared, that when they go to university they can make themselves understood in their classroom, and this program is to help prepare the students for university life. … We can just make sure that their speaking ability is at the point where the professors can understand them and their classmates can understand them.

In his writing class, he usually addresses grammar through the writing itself. He marks the writing for grammatical accuracy and he tries to provide as much feedback as possible. He described the process as follows:

> I will ask for clarifications if I don't understand them, but … all of the papers I mark for grammatical accuracy. I circle mistakes, I write in possible revisions so that they can see how things might have to be changed … I try to give comments

as much as possible—a helpful comment that might help them improve their writing skills.

Kate finds that time is a critical factor, the problem being that "we don't have enough time." Since each class lasts for only 50 minutes, and there might be up to 20 students in the class, it is difficult for her to have one-on-one contact with each of her students "to address each student individually and practice specific sounds." To get around this problem, when helping her students with the pronunciation of specific sounds, especially "if there is a minority and a different language group than the rest of the class," she asks them to send her an e-mail or come to see her after class, and she then gives them additional exercises tailored to their specific needs. She thinks this is a good way to provide encouragement for those who need it.

As for Jen, in her grammar class, she tries to explain rules to her students in more than one way. She also uses follow-up repetition to address an issue that she finds her students have difficulty with.

Question 4: Which of the activities that you use in your classroom do you find the most effective?

In response to the fourth question, Sarah said she uses games in her classes. She stated that any kind of game in which she can get the students to compete against each other brings out participation and it works well. She also uses a variety of teaching materials in her class. For example, she uses movie clips for her writing class and songs for her grammar class. In addition, she finds group work particularly effective.

Jim finds that activities that encourage his students to think, analyze, and present reasons for their answers are especially beneficial. Further, he finds that in his writing class, it helps if oral production precedes written production. For example, when he

teaches his students about argumentative writing, he gets them to debate the topic orally first, and this makes it easier for them to write about it later.

May said that she tries to keep encouraging her students with their learning since she finds that motivation in learning ESL is important.

Dan finds that any activity that involves giving personal information about himself to his students works well with them. For example, when he relates a personal experience or when he brings something from home and makes that a part of what is going on in class, his students pay much more attention and are far more alert. He also expressed the view that "the personal effect is a part of making things effective." He tries to use group work as well as interactive activities in his class. He strongly believes that the most effective activity is one in which a student gets to spend some time alone with the teacher, focusing on specific issues.

Kate finds that in her grammar class, exercises that required her students to fill in the blanks are effective, but asking the students to write a few sentences on the board using the grammatical structure being learned is also a useful strategy.

Jen uses games in her class and it seems to work well for her students. Another approach that she finds effective is using music to teach grammar. As an example, she gave the following description of one of her activities in which she used a song:

> I made a music CD with modals and … we listened to the song and they had to identify the modals in the song and also the function … [and then] we discussed how the modals [were] functioning within the song. … It's just a bit different than just doing all the reading that they normally do.

Question 5: What do you think you can do to make the language learning of the learners in your classroom more effective?

In response to the fifth question, Sarah said she does a needs-analysis on her class to get an idea of where to start and what she needs to focus on in each of her classes. For example, in her writing class, the needs-analysis gives her an idea of what topics her students are interested in writing about. Jim finds that doing group work correctly makes the language learning more effective. May feels that it would be better to have smaller classes.

Dan thinks that personal interaction and spontaneous conversation make language learning more effective. He further believes that resources to support learning, motivation, and application inside and outside the classroom must also be taken into account. He elaborated on this idea as follows:

> I think that especially with this next generation of students— they are very interested in computers and [the] Internet and [the] media, and so I think the more that you can … work technology into your classroom, the more it would help students to pay attention and hopefully learn more from what's going on there. In our classroom here … we do have access to DVD and VHS technology [but] we don't have computers or projectors where we can show computer or Internet content in the classrooms right now.

Kate said that she would look for a different textbook for her grammar class, one that had clearer explanations, since she finds that her students appreciate having a textbook that they can use both in and out of the classroom (i.e., a textbook that they can use to study on their own). In addition, she would reduce the number of students in the class, since it would be easier for her as a teacher to give her students individual attention if she had fewer students to deal with. She prefers to have students from several different language backgrounds in one class rather than a lot of students from the same language

background. She realizes that the ELP cannot always arrange classes in this way, but if it could be done, she thought that it would be a better environment for her students to learn ESL.

As for Jen, she said that she would try to help the students either individually or as a group on issues they have difficulties with. She gives her students a questionnaire to fill out about her way of teaching, the way they learn, and what she could do differently to help them in their learning.

Additional Questions

The following section presents the teachers' responses to additional questions that arose from their responses to the main questions. These questions related to teaching materials used in the ELP and their suggestions and recommendations to the program.

In regard to the question on the teachers' opinions about the textbooks used in the ELP, the teachers stated that the textbooks are generally selected by the program's skill-area coordinators and are assigned to the teachers who teach these skills each term (i.e., Grammar, Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing). Thus, the selection of teaching materials in the program is not a matter of choice for each individual teacher. The teachers who were interviewed for this study felt that even though they had been assigned good textbooks, they often had to create their own teaching materials, since additional teaching materials were needed to enrich the learning experience of their students. Thus, there was a need for teachers to be creative in addition to being hard working, well prepared, well informed, and resourceful.

The following are detailed responses from the teachers who were interviewed in regard to the textbooks used in the five instruction areas.

Grammar: The teachers who have taught in this skill area find that the textbooks are good (e.g., good explanation and exercises). However, Sarah mentioned that she has to come up with her own expansion and post-activity exercises quite often. May finds that *Grammar Dimensions* is the best textbook for her grammar class.

Reading, writing, and listening: The teachers generally agreed that the textbooks used are good.

Speaking: Jim finds it challenging to use his textbook in teaching speaking. He said that he frequently has to create his own activities for his students since, in his opinion, the content of the textbook does not relate sufficiently to the real world. Sarah finds that the speaking textbook is the most difficult textbook to teach from since there is not much useful information in it, so she has to be creative in coming up with ways to use the activities that are there and apply them to her class. Kate thinks that the coordinators could have made a better choice for the speaking textbook.

With respect to the teaching materials used in the ELP, the teachers interviewed for this study feel that meeting individual needs is a major challenge. Creativity is needed in using, presenting, adapting, and applying the textbook materials in the classroom. Finding authentic materials on one's own is an additional challenge. The real problem is that the teachers are not informed of the criteria used in the selection of textbooks, and they have no input in the textbook selection process. The result is that they have to do their best to find and incorporate additional materials into their lessons to make up for the deficiencies in the textbooks that they are required to use.

The following suggestions were offered by the teachers during the interviews regarding textbooks and teaching materials: (a) there should be a resource room with

teaching materials that teachers can draw upon to supplement textbooks; and (b) teachers should be given the opportunity to select their own textbooks.

In response to the question regarding what recommendations the teachers would give to the ELP to make the program more effective, the following recommendations were offered: (a) there should be a test bank for the mid-term and final exams, and (b) a pronunciation class should be added as an addition skill area in the program. May articulated the problem with test-taking in this way: "We have to submit exams—mid-term exams, final exams—to the coordinators to get [their] approval and we are expected to work with another teacher who teaches the same skills and levels." The problem is that this system does not make the most efficient use of time. May felt that the teachers in the program would find a test bank beneficial because they would not have to develop a new test every time they taught a particular class. The questions in the test bank could be reused or recycled, especially for the reading and listening skills.

Kate said she "would definitely like the program to have integrated skills." She thought the ELP should combine reading and writing into one class, and speaking and listening into one class. She explained the advantage of this by saying that "if I teach speaking and … listening at the same time, then we can listen to something and we can speak [about it] later; … [the] same with reading and writing." The issue of integrated skills was raised earlier in analyzing the data from the student interviews. There it was noted that instructors cannot help but address skills other than the one they are supposed to be teaching in a particular class since no skill operates in isolation and, therefore, cannot be taught in isolation. Dan, in his interview, gave evidence of this when he said that he often finds the need to address grammar issues in his writing class. Likewise, Jim gets the students in his writing class to debate a topic orally before they get down to

writing about it, especially when they are working on argumentative essays. It was noted earlier that dividing the skills artificially into separate classes interferes with the natural processes of language learning and is inefficient in that it results in a considerable amount of duplication. Kate's suggestion here could be carried further so that greater integration of the skills is worked into the program.

Kate felt that there should be a separate pronunciation class to help the students with their pronunciation. She admits that some students may find a pronunciation class boring, but she firmly believes, from her own personal experience, that it would be helpful for the students in learning ESL. She said, "I know when I learned another language, it [was] really helpful …." The data from the student interviews corroborate Kate's conviction. There was overwhelming agreement among the students that they needed more intensive focus on improving their pronunciation.

Questionnaire Data

The responses were given in answer to a set of five questions. The five questions are listed below in the order in which they were asked in the questionnaire section.

Question 1: In what percentage of the activities in the following three phases is English used or involved in your classroom?

The three phases refer to: (a) The Pre-Activity Phase, (b) The Activity Phase, and (c) The Post-Activity Phase. The results are shown in Table 22. The figures represent the mean of the percentages assigned by the participants to each phase based on the classes they taught.

Question 2: In what percentage of the activities in the following skill areas is English used or involved in your classroom?

Table 22

Average Percentage of English Use in Three Phases for Speaking, Writing, Reading, Listening, and Grammar

	Phase		
Class	Pre-Activity	Activity	Post-Activity
Speaking	10%	72.5%	17.5%
Writing	10%	72.0%	18.0%
Reading	30%	50.0%	20.0%
Listening	10%	80.0%	10.0%
Grammar	16%	60.0%	24.0%

All the participants gave 100% in response. Jen also noted that "All activities are English based" and Sarah wrote "should be, although based on students willingness to participate."

Question 3: Which of the following language skills do you address in your teaching?

In response to this question, all the participants listed the practical language skills they addressed in their teaching specifically. There are some similarities in the way the participants responded. Their responses are presented in tabular form in Table 23.

Speaking: Dan and Jim had similar perspectives: they both rated speaking and listening skills very important and reading and writing skills fairly important to their speaking class. However, Jim had a different perspective on grammar, rating it very important to his speaking class, while Dan rated it only fairly important.

Question 4: Please rate the degree of importance of each of the following language skills for the course you are teaching.

Writing: Dan and Jim found that writing skills and grammar are very important and they also agreed that reading is important. Dan rated both speaking and listening skills as somewhat important. However, Jim found that speaking is important, while reading and listening are fairly important to his writing class. Sarah and Jen also agreed with both Dan and Jim that writing skills are important for the writing class. They also rated reading skills and grammar as important and also agreed with Dan that speaking and listening skills are somewhat important for writing.

Reading: May rated reading skill as very important and grammar as important. She noted that the reason she rated grammar as important in reading is that it helps the students to comprehend better. She rated writing and listening skills as somewhat important and speaking as fairly important.

Table 23

Language Skills Addressed by Teachers in their Teaching

Reading:	textbook exercises, example essays, grammar points, blackboard notes, research activities, inferences, skimming and scanning, paraphrasing, facts and opinions, eliciting knowledge (try to understand if students recognize the underlying structure)
Writing:	resume writing, thesis and essay structure, note taking, error correction activities, paraphrasing, book review, making sure students learned vocabulary, brainstorming, outlining, thesis statement, journals
Speaking:	teacher questions/responses, presentations, poster presentations, debates, speeches, interviews, function words/expressions, idioms, discussion, reading aloud
Listening:	note taking, lectures, pronunciation (rhythm and stress), speech, listening to teacher/video/peers
Grammar:	corrective feedback on papers, lessons in text, producing tenses/comparatives/nouns/gerunds/infinitives/clauses/vocabulary, exploring and expanding on the rules, clarifying

Listening: Sarah rated listening skills as very important, writing skills as important, speaking as fairly important, and reading skills and grammar as somewhat important for her listening class.

Grammar: Jim, Kate, Sarah, and Jen all agreed that grammar is very important. Jim also thought that writing and speaking skills are very important for grammar. Kate rated writing and speaking skills as fairly important while Sarah thought that writing and speaking skills are important. Jim and Sarah shared that same perspective that reading skills are fairly important while Kate rated reading as not at all important to her grammar class. Jim rated listening skills as important, Kate rated listening skill as somewhat important, and Sarah rated listening skills as fairly important, while Jen rated reading, writing, and speaking skills as important.

Question 5: Please rate the degree of importance of each of the following language skills for success at university.

In response to this question, all participants rated reading and writing skills as very important. Dan, May, Kate, and Sarah agreed that speaking skills are fairly important, while Jim rated them as very important and Jen rated them as important. All of the participants except Dan agreed that listening skills are very important. Dan selected important for listening skills. Dan, Jim, May, and Jen all agreed that grammar is important, while Kate rated it very important and Jen rated it important.

Analysis of Data from Administrator

In a study of this sort, the administrators of language schools and institutions must be taken into account since they play a major role in identifying the language needs of ESL students and use their findings to plan and adapt curricula and educational programs.

In the current study, one of the ELP administrators provided information and shared insights in response to 12 interview questions regarding the ELP program.

Question 1: What is the purpose of the ELP and what are its expected outcomes?

In response to the first question, the administrator stated that the ELP was designed to assist international students or speakers of other languages in increasing their proficiency in English. She said, further, that it is intended for students who want to pursue higher studies at a North American college or university, but it is flexible enough to meet whatever purposes the learner might have. It should be noted that while the administrator claimed flexibility for the program, the data collected from the students and instructors (discussed above) indicate that the ELP is not as flexible as it might be in meeting the individual needs of the learners. For example, the non-academically oriented students in the study found the academically oriented classroom activities to be a waste of their time.

Question 2: What policies or criteria do you use in deciding which international students to accept into the ELP?

In response to this question, the administrator indicated that originally any international student with a basic knowledge of English was eligible. All he or she had to do was fill out the application form and pay the deposit, and that was enough to be accepted into the program. But currently many of the students in the program have *conditional* acceptance at a Canadian university because they are not sufficiently proficient in English. Their acceptance at the university for regular undergraduate studies is conditional upon their attending the ELP and passing the highest level. However, the ELP itself does not have any restrictions on who can apply. The ELP is generally intended for adults, so applicants have to be at least 18 years of age, and this usually

means that they have completed high school or completed some college or university courses, but this is not always the case.

In response to an additional question as to whether or not the students come to the ELP through an agency, the administrator replied that there are all kinds of ways in which students come to the program. Many people do come through an agency, since the agent helps them get through the paperwork, and get a visa, and so on. However, the program does not require applicants to apply through an agent. A lot of applicants apply on their own; some come through the ELP website, and many hear of the program simply through word of mouth. The ELP has connections with universities around the world, and this is another means by which students come to hear of the program.

In response to a follow-up question as to whether or not ELP rejects any applicants, the administrator indicated that the only reason the program would reject an applicant would be that he or she is a minor and would have to have a local guardian; the university does not provide guardianship. If an applicant is a minor and comes with his or her own guardian, there would be no reason to bar him or her from entering the program.

Question 3: What policies or criteria do you use in hiring instructors for the ELP?

In response to this question, the administrator said that there is a job description that the university has developed for this purpose. The qualifications are stated clearly: the instructor must have TESL Ontario certification or its equivalent. This is the minimum requirement. ELP also has instructors who have graduate degrees, and this is recognized as an additional qualification. It is interesting that the ELP has no specific policy regarding the hiring of non-native English speakers as instructors. As noted above, the students in this study expressed some reservations about being taught speaking and pronunciation by non-native speakers. The administration needs to take note of these

reservations and create a policy by which native-like proficiency in *spoken* English is included as one of the minimum requirements in the hiring of instructors.

Questions 4: What policies or criteria do you use in selecting textbooks for the ELP?

In response to this question, the administrator replied that the textbooks are selected by five coordinators (all of whom are experienced ESL teachers)—one for each of the five subject areas (reading, listening, writing, speaking, and grammar). The instructors and coordinators meet as a group to review textbooks each term and the coordinators take suggestions and comments from the teachers into account when selecting textbooks. She stated: "We look at what textbooks should be used and we look at the publisher's references as well. But normally the coordinators would be the ones who choose what would be suitable for the course and the program that we have." She mentioned other considerations as well: "We do not want to choose textbooks that are too expensive—we try to balance it so that the students are not overwhelmed by the price. There is a constant review process and we consider a lot of aspects."

In response to a follow-up question as to whether or not the program uses the same textbooks every term, she said, "We try to cycle the textbooks. We might try a given textbook for a year or so." She further stated that the program tries to find the best fit, but in some areas it is difficult to find suitable textbooks, particularly at the two extremes—the beginners' level (which requires a combination of basic English skills) and the advanced level (which requires something more geared to college entrance). So, for Level 5 the textbooks may not all be ESL oriented.

As noted in the analysis of the student and instructor data above, both the students and instructors in the study expressed dissatisfaction with some of the textbooks. The instructors, in particular, expressed a certain amount of frustration that their feedback was

not being taken into account in the process of selecting textbooks for the program. This issue will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. Here it is sufficient to note that there is a discrepancy between what the administrator said in her interview on this matter and what the instructors said in theirs.

Question 5: What changes have you seen over the years since you assumed the position of Assistant Director of ELP?

In response to this question, the administrator said,

> This is my 26th year working at this institution. When we started the program, we had about 35-40 students. We now have 35 staff, and we will probably have over 50 this coming summer. As for students, we now have about 300, and by August we expect to have about 700 students. The size of the program has increased tremendously. ESL teaching and the whole profession of TESL have changed drastically—it used to be something like volunteer work for faculty wives—some professor's wife had a volunteer position teaching ESL at a multicultural centre.

Another thing she talked about was where the students are coming from these days—this is affected by political trends and economic changes. She commented, "At one time it was impossible for Chinese students to get a visa. Now you can see the change, there are a lot of Chinese students in the program." She did not mention the problems that have arisen as a result of this shift in demographics, but, as was pointed out earlier in this chapter, the students themselves find it detrimental that there are so many Chinese-speaking students in the program. This issue will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Question 6: What kinds of students do you think have been successful in acquiring university-level proficiency in English through the ELP?

In response to this question, the administrator stated that the students go through an intensive program of English language instruction, so they spend 25 hours a week in class, for 14 weeks. They are going to get a lot of practice in using English. It is a communication-based program, so even if they studied only reading and writing before coming to the program, when they enter the program, they are forced to use English in speaking and listening. At the higher levels, she noted, the students are prepared for essay writing, presentations, seminars, and debates, so ELP tries very hard to help students to prepare for the type of activities they will be doing in university. In addition, ELP helps students get used to the new surroundings in a protected environment, and by the time they get to university, they will feel more comfortable. Even so, it is a huge shock to go from a class of 15-20 students in the ELP to a class of 500 students at university. University is much more impersonal, and the student is on his or her own. The transition from ELP to university is a huge jump. Another thing that is different is the type of work that is required. At university, the textbooks are different and students are often required to read the textbook or other material and do some preparation on their own before going to class. Many international students are not ready for this, even after going through ELP.

While the administrator raises some interesting points in this response, she appears to have misheard the question, or at least misunderstood its intent. The purpose of the question was to get her to identify what she thinks are the personal qualities that contribute to the success of ELP students, and of second language learners in general. In other words, what makes some students more successful than others in learning English to the extent that they can handle university-level education in North America with relative ease? Perhaps, in her role as administrator she does not have sufficient contact

with the students to develop the kind of familiarity with them that is needed to answer such a question.

Question 7: Is there any specific training required for ELP instructors? What kind of training does ELP provide for its instructors, if any?

In response to this question, the administrator stated that instructors come with certain qualifications already in place, but the program does have an orientation at the beginning of each term. Through the term, the program offers regular professional development sessions during which instructors share ideas and teaching experiences, and there are frequent teachers' meetings. The program encourages its instructors to attend TESL Ontario meetings and conferences. While these are useful ways for instructors to keep abreast of the latest developments in the field of second language teaching, they do not, however, ensure consistency across the program. This would account for the wide divergence of opinion among the students in the study in regard to the kind of language instruction they have received so far. Some teachers were singled out for particular criticism, as noted above, in regard to issues such as pacing, textbook misuse, lack of teaching experience, and so on. These criticisms were not directed at all the teachers, and this suggests that the minimum requirement of TESL certification is not sufficient to guarantee consistency of instruction across the program. In order to provide high-quality instruction across the board, an English language program needs to provide its instructors with a certain amount of training in the delivery of language instruction so as to acquaint them with the minimum standards required of them and the kind of outcomes expected of them. Consistency of delivery is paramount to any effective language training program, and this can be achieved only through specific training in the methods and practices that are necessary to achieve the objectives of the program.

Question 8: What do you consider to be the greatest challenge (or challenges) facing ELP students, instructors, and the program itself? How do you address this challenge (or these challenges)?

In response to this question, the administrator said that for the program itself and for someone like herself, the greatest challenge is to be constantly aware of the students' needs and how these needs are changing. She noted that the make-up of the population in the program is changing all the time, based on changing conditions in the home country of the students, especially in places such as China. The program has to make adjustments all the time in response to the changing demographic backgrounds of the students. At one time, ELP students were predominantly young people from abroad, between the ages of 19 and 22—people who had just finished high school. Currently, there are many more mature students, with different backgrounds: landed immigrants, people with families, people who have worked for several years. This is something new, since the ELP was once strictly for international students, who were not allowed to work. Another challenge that she mentioned is how to serve the needs not just of international students but also of non-native speakers in the local community. She said that she could see the program expanding to working with landed immigrants, especially when the new building is completed.

In regard to the challenges that teachers might face, she said, "I think that the instructors always have to balance professionalism with the personal touch and this is a great challenge." Another challenge that the instructors face is that they have to deal with a mixed group of students: a small percentage of the students want to go on to university but a much larger percentage are there just to learn English. Some students stay longer than others. Some students are there against their will—their parents made that decision

for them. And once they actually arrive at the university, they realize that they have the freedom to do whatever they like, since their parents are thousands of miles away. For some of them, it is the first time they are away from home. They struggle with these issues, and this makes it an even greater challenge for the instructors to teach them. It has always been a challenge to balance the needs of those who really want to study with the interests of those who simply want to enjoy themselves. Those who plan to be in Canada for a short time expect something different from the program from those who are in Canada to pursue higher studies.

Question 9: In what way do you think the ELP could be modified and improved to maximize the benefit to its students, instructors, and the program itself?

In response to this question, the administrator said,

> We hope that we will have the new building soon, and all the departments involved in international relations will be in the same area. We will have new and better facilities. For example, we have plans to improve the student lounge, to put in comfortable sitting areas, to have smart classroom, perhaps even a staff lounge, which we don't have right now. Better facilities will definitely help.

She also pointed out that ESL teaching is going in a new direction and this will affect the program as well. The emphasis will be not so much on broad-based skill acquisition but on content, so there will be programs in English for Specific Purposes, for example Business English, and English for the Tourism Industry, and so on. These are some of the ways in which the program can be enriched to benefit everyone concerned—the students, the instructors, and the institution.

The administrator's comments about English for Specific Purposes (also known as English for Special Purposes) are worth noting, since they speak directly to an issue

that was raised earlier in analyzing the data from the student interviews. In that section it was noted that the students in the study came into the program with a range of purposes, not all of which were academically oriented, and that even among the ones who were academically oriented, a range of academic fields was represented, each with its own unique set of communication skills. It was also noted that the students judged certain classroom activities to be helpful and others to be unhelpful based on the field of study they intended to pursue, or, more broadly still, the general purpose for which they were studying English (e.g., getting a job, as opposed to studying at a Canadian university). It would appear that if the ELP and other ESL programs are to have any success in meeting the needs of their students, then English for Special Purposes is not merely an enhancement: it is a necessity.

Question 10: How do you or the ELP address feedback and/or comments from both the students and instructors?

In response to this question, she indicated that there is an evaluation at the end of each term. The students get a copy of their evaluation, she gets a copy, and the instructors get a copy. The students are asked to evaluate their home-stay experience as well. In addition to making written comments, she noted, the students have an opportunity to talk to her personally. She added that the program also has an annual review and a performance review of the instructors. Once again, the administrator misconstrued the thrust of the question. She spoke to the issue of *how* the program collects feedback—in other words, the channels or mechanisms by which feedback reaches the administration. However, the thrust of the question was *what* the administration does with the feedback it receives. That is to say, how are the insights that are gained from the feedback incorporated into the program and how are the students' and instructors' suggestions

implemented to improve the effectiveness of the program? As noted above in the various discussions on textbook selection, feedback from students and instructors does not appear to be reaching the administration, or if it is, then the administration does not appear to be giving it due consideration. This issue will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Question 11: What mechanisms do you have in place for determining whether the ELP meets the needs and expectations of the students in the program?

In response to this question, the administrator stated that the program does a needs-assessment every term for each class in every subject area. The program also looks at feedback from the evaluations and keeps track of how many students who complete the program get into university. While this response does answer the question, it does so only minimally, and thus provides little insight into what exactly the administration does to ensure that the students' needs and expectations are met. The question must be raised as to whether it is sufficient merely to *look at* feedback from evaluations or to keep track of how many ELP "graduates" get into university. As noted earlier, getting into university is not the ultimate goal of an English language program such as the ELP; rather, the goal is to ensure that ESL students can function effectively in English once they get into university. It would be more effective to track ELP alumni *after* they get into university to see how well they are able to cope with the linguistic demands of the university environment. On the whole, it would appear that ELP's mechanisms as described here by the administrator are not entirely effective since the students in this study indicated that in several respects their needs were not being met. Patton (2002) has written compellingly about the need for educational programs to develop an evaluation system that addresses individual concerns and needs as opposed to a generic system that applies across the board. He states:

> Educators involved in individualized approaches … need evaluation methods that permit documentation of a variety of outcomes, and they resist measuring the success of complex, individualized learning experiences by any limited set of standardized outcome measures (e.g., improved reading scores, better spelling, or more knowledge about some specific subject). (p. 158)

Given Patton's comments, it would appear that the ELP needs to overhaul its evaluation procedures and create a system that emphasizes the individual learner's language learning goals and the needs that arise from these goals. This issue will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

Question 12: How effective do you think the ELP is in enhancing the students' performance both academically and socially? In what way(s) is it effective?

In response to this question, the administrator said,

> Of course, I am going say it is effective since I have devoted my whole career to it. I strongly believe that by spending 25 hours a week doing a wide range of activities in all the language skills, getting used to working in groups, getting used to a university environment, getting used to the facilities such as the computer labs, library, and so on, our students are much better prepared for university than those who come in simply with a TOEFL score. I also think that socially, the students are better prepared for life in Canada by living with a home-stay family. They become comfortable with the town, they have interactions with their peers in their classes and with different instructors, so they get used to a group system.

While much of this is true on the surface, it presents an overly "rosy" picture of the ELP and it suggests that the ELP administration is somewhat out of touch with the students in the program and their perspective on the effectiveness of the language

instruction they receive through it. Perhaps the administrator is judging effectiveness by the number of ELP graduates that enter a Canadian university. However, the students judge effectiveness by a different standard, namely, how well they can function in the high-pressured English-speaking environment of the Canadian university once they have been thrust into it. To the administrator's credit, it should be said that she is fully aware of her personal bias in favour of the ELP, having devoted her entire professional life to it. However, this cannot—and should not—be made the criterion by which the program is judged.

Summary

This chapter has brought together three somewhat different perspectives on the effectiveness of the ELP: that of the students, the instructors, and the administration. While these perspectives are sometimes contradictory, they are also complementary and together they provide a well-rounded assessment of the language instruction provided by the program. The analysis of the students' responses on the questionnaire and in the personal interviews proved to be the most fruitful, for it provided the most realistic picture of the program of all three perspectives. The instructors provided a valuable counterpoint to this picture, often confirming what the students said, but also revealing that they usually do not see the "big picture" of the students' language learning process, since their exposure to the students is limited largely to the classroom. The administrators' perspective was perhaps the most far-removed from the "reality" of the situation as it was revealed in the comments of the students. The implications of these differing perspectives will be the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the language needs of international students who attended an ELP at a university in Ontario. Using both qualitative and quantitative measures, it investigated what these students believe they need most in order to communicate successfully and fluently in academic and social settings in Canada. The study was undertaken in the hope that the data collected could be used to make English language programs and/or academic programs in general at Canadian universities more conducive to learning for those students whose first language is not English. The research questions and the responses to them were analyzed for dominant themes and recurrent patterns among the students and the instructors and the single administrator who participated in the study. The analysis resulted in important findings about the needs of ESL students in language programs generally and the ELP in particular, and gave rise to some practical suggestions for ESL teachers and students as well as for administrators of ESL programs.

The findings of this study indicate that adult second-language learners have very definite ideas about what they need to learn in order to communicate successfully in English in academic and social settings. While these ideas varied considerably from participant to participant, there was a consensus that listening and speaking skills are of primary importance and should receive more attention. The student participants in the study also held very specific ideas about what they expected from their teachers and the ELP. Likewise, the instructors who participated in the study had specific ideas about what they expected from the program and about how they could make their own teaching more effective. Certain types of activities were found to be more effective than others, but the consensus was that the ideal approach consists of a combination of methods,

strategies, and activities tailored specifically to the needs of individual students in any given class. The interview with one of the administrators in the ELP provided further insight into the problems and issues involved in running an English language training program. The administrator provided a "big-picture" view of the program, talking at length about a wide variety of subjects, including admission to the program, the changing demographics of the student population in the ELP and how they affect programming decisions, the process of textbook selection, future plans for enhancements to the program, and current trends in ESL teaching that will influence the direction that the program might take in the future.

Analysis of the background data provided by the students indicated, among other things, that the ESL instruction that these students received in their home country was not sufficiently helpful to them in terms of achieving actual performative proficiency in English (as opposed to proficiency demonstrated on a standardized test) and may actually have interfered in some cases with the ESL instruction they were receiving in Canada. The conclusion from this finding is that ESL teaching in Canada may need to include an element of remediation as a way of undoing the "damage" done by prior ESL instruction in the country of origin. This remediation will have to be done on a country-by-country basis, since each country of origin will have its own system of ESL instruction, and they may not all be equally detrimental to the learners—and some may not be detrimental at all. It should be noted that the countries involved in this study were China, South Korea, and Taiwan, where traditional methods of teaching, with a heavy emphasis on memorization and translation, are still common. In these countries, the ESL instruction (as indeed all educational instruction) is teacher-centered rather than learner-centered. As was noted in Chapter One, according to current linguistic theory, the learner-centered

approach is vital to achieving positive learning outcomes (Richterich & Chancerel, 1980). It was also noted in Chapter Two that the learner's beliefs about second language learning (usually based on prior learning experience) are a powerful mediating factor in the language learning experience in the classroom (Lightbown & Spada, 2004). For example, the study by Yorio (1986) referred to in Chapter Two revealed that advanced ESL learners at the university level are often already convinced that their progress is being impeded by the way they are being taught English in North American ESL programs. This is a serious problem that needs to be addressed. Prejudice on the part of some learners against teaching methods employed in the West will need to be overcome before learning for these learners can be optimally effective.

Analysis of the data from the student questionnaires indicated that, among other things, ESL instructors need to keep track of how much their students understand of what is going on in their classrooms. One way to do this is to be aware of the amount and kind of ESL classroom experience each student has had (from prior ESL instruction) and to use this awareness to help those students whose past experience is lower than the class average. Above all, the data showed that overwhelmingly, the students felt they need to learn how to communicate fluently in spoken English and to improve their listening comprehension. They were most concerned about being able to perform adequately in a college or university classroom, understanding the lectures, taking part in class discussions, and interacting with their fellow-students and professors. That is, while conversational skills are important, they do not necessarily equip the ESL speaker to function successfully in their role as postsecondary students in an institution of higher learning in North America; such success demands high-level discussion and listening

skills, whereas the speaking curriculum often tends to focus on survival English and conversational skills.

Analysis of the data gathered from the interviews with the students revealed a wide range of concerns for the students that have implications for teaching methods used in the classroom as well as for the structure of the program as a whole. The major issues that emerged were: (a) insufficient time during the class period, especially for the speaking class; (b) the predominance of one linguistic group in the classes across the program; (c) insufficient emphasis on vocabulary improvement and pronunciation; (d) insufficient error correction; (e) inappropriate use of classroom time by teachers; (f) poor choice of textbooks in some cases; (g) ineffective teaching methods; and (h) ineffective or unhelpful classroom activities.

Analysis of the data gathered from the interviews with the instructors revealed that the ESL instruction provided by the ELP has met with some successes, particularly in establishing a positive classroom environment and interactive methods. For example, two of the instructors said they were successful in stimulating greater class participation by using games and thus introducing an element of competition into the activities used in class. Two other instructors spoke enthusiastically of the positive results they got from incorporating songs and movies into their in-class activities, especially in teaching grammar and writing. Several instructors gave *group work* and *pair work* high ratings for their effectiveness, and one instructor, in particular, found *peer feedback* helpful in his writing class.

However, for all these successes, there are many more concerns, which must not go unmentioned. One problem that appeared repeatedly, and was mentioned directly or indirectly by at least three of the instructors, was the problem of motivation, or rather,

lack of it. All three expressed frustration at being unable to motivate their students to do what they (the instructors) wanted or expected them to do. One of them identified a specific area in which this was a particular problem for her: getting her students to avoid using their first language when communicating with each other in her class. This is an especially difficult problem to deal with when a majority of the class is made up of one particular linguistic group, a situation that is rather pervasive in the ELP, and will be addressed in further detail below. As discussed in Chapter Four, it might be helpful to distinguish between *apparent* lack of motivation and *real* lack of motivation. Apparent lack of motivation results from instructors imposing their own agenda on the learners, that is, making the learners do things that seem to the learners to be irrelevant to their own personal goals. Learners whose motivation is instrumental may appear to be unmotivated if the activities they are given assume that their motivation is integrative. Instructors need to be aware of this in selecting their classroom activities. The problem of lack of motivation may in fact disappear if the instructors take the time to understand the kind of motivation that their students have and provide them with activities that speak to that kind of motivation. It should also be noted that the students who participated in the study showed a high level of motivation both in the enthusiasm with which they participated in the study and in the personal strategies they reported using outside the classroom to improve their English communication skills. Many of them indicated that they avail themselves of the Internet and community resources, such as local church group activities, as a means of advancing their language skills. This shows a high level of intrinsic motivation on the part of the students, something that the instructors appear to be unaware of.

An issue closely related to motivation is that of progress, an issue that came up directly or indirectly in the students' questionnaires and proficiency test results, as well as in the instructors' interviews. As mentioned in Chapters Two and Four, Nunan (1999) noted that motivation is likely to decline if the learner does not get the sense that he or she is making progress. Thus, if there is *real* lack of motivation (as opposed to *apparent* lack of motivation), one way to turn it around could be to get the learners to monitor their own progress (a strategy proposed by Nunan). In the interviews with the instructors, one of the instructors observed that the students find it particularly difficult to "see" their own progress in speaking. In analyzing this observation in Chapter Four, it was noted that the inability to see one's progress can lead to lowered self-confidence and, hence, to even slower progress. One way to get the students to "see" their own progress is to have them engage, at regular intervals, in unscripted, unrehearsed, spontaneous conversations and get them to make audio recordings of these conversations. They can then listen to the recordings in succession and note what progress they can observe. They might even be given objective criteria to use. For example, they could be asked to count the number of pauses or the number of grammatical mistakes they recognize or the number of false starts in each recording and then compare the data they collect for each recording over time. They might even be asked to create a graph of their findings. Seeing the progress line go up on a graph can be a tremendous boost to self-confidence.

As well, some instructors expressed concern about the rate of progress of individual learners. This concern was reflected in the analysis of the data from the proficiency test. In Chapter Four, it was noted that the actual progress of the students (as observed in the proficiency test scores) lagged behind the rate of progress required for them to complete each level in 14 weeks. Given that the sample size for the proficiency

test score analysis was extremely limited (n=5), it is recommended that programs like the ELP do an analysis of the test scores of all their students to determine whether the average *observed* progress rate matches the *expected* progress rate and then analyze what is responsible for the discrepancy, if any. For the purposes of analysis, it would be desirable to have separate scores for each of the five language learning areas, something that was not available in the current study. It is important to monitor progress in each language area, not only from the point of view of the individual learner's learning objectives, but also in the interests of identifying those areas where instruction may be inappropriate and need adjustment.

The proficiency test data also showed a wide disparity in individual rates of progress, demonstrating that some learners progress considerably more quickly (or more slowly) than others. As noted in Chapter Four, it would appear that the ELP caters to the mean and is not sufficiently flexible to deal with those learners who fall on either side of this mean. As a rule, those learners who learn faster than the average are not adversely affected by the rigidity of language instruction programs. It is the students at the bottom end of the scale that suffer the most. Their only option is to repeat the level over (and over again, if necessary) until their score on the exit test indicates that they are "ready" to go on to the next level. However, this may not be the most effective solution to the problem. Unless it is simply the case that some students require more time to assimilate the learning at each level (and this is often so), a student who was not able to "pass" the course the first time is unlikely to be more successful the second (or third) time around, especially with the same teacher and the same activities.

One way to deal with learners that show slower than average progress is to give them a *diagnostic* test (as opposed to a *proficiency* test or a *progress* test). A diagnostic

test is designed to diagnose individual problems that learners have that are limiting their proficiency or holding back their progress. A diagnostic test can also be designed to identify what kind of learner each student is in terms of the distinction between *global* learners and *analytic* learners discussed in Chapter Two (Ellis, 1989; Nelson, 1995). As Ellis noted, global learners function better in the context of the communicative approach, while analytic learners do better with a rule-based approach. It may very well be that those whose progress appears to be slow are fundamentally analytic learners trying to survive in an environment that is dominated by the communicative approach. A well-designed diagnostic test would be able to reveal whether this is the case for any given student. It is interesting to note that diagnostic tests play no role whatsoever in the ELP. Yet, such tests are vital in identifying and meeting individual needs. A *personalized* learning program is vital to any language learning situation if all individuals are to make optimal progress in their language acquisition. ESL programs such as the ELP would benefit greatly from incorporating the practice of personalizing each individual learner's learning experience at a systemic level into its overall instructional program. It is not enough for each instructor to give individual students personal attention from time to time. Personalization has to occur at the level of the system if the problems identified in this study are to be properly addressed.

The lag in the progress rate and the differential rates of progress observed in this study may also be caused by the learners' individual beliefs in regard to what kind of ESL instruction they could be receiving. This issue was discussed in Chapter Two as well as earlier in this chapter. Research (reviewed in Chapter Two) has shown that learners believe that they cannot make progress unless they feel comfortable with the kind of language instruction they receive. This would be especially true if they come from a

country where traditional methods of teaching are still widely used, such as China, South Korea, and Taiwan, the countries represented in this study. Students from these countries tend to be *passive* learners because of the teacher-centered approach to instruction that they have been exposed to in their home country. To help improve the rate of progress of these students, it may be necessary to convert them from *passive* learners to *active* learners, that is, learners who take responsibility for their own progress and take the initiative in improving their language skills rather than expecting to be "spoon-fed" by the teacher. It is also necessary to work actively to convince these students that modern approaches to language teaching are more effective than traditional ones. Granted, this is a daunting task, but one way to make a start is to raise the issue early in the program and discuss it openly and in a systematic and organized manner, not merely in passing, but as an essential part of the students' language instruction. It could be included as a mandatory part of an "orientation program" before students begin their regular in-class instruction.

The issue of progress also includes student self-confidence. The connection between progress and self-confidence was discussed in Chapter Four and earlier in this chapter. As noted, the study revealed relatively high rates of self-confidence, but also provided some evidence that self-confidence was over-estimated. Therefore, ESL instructors need to focus more on realistic confidence-building activities as a regular part of their instruction. The instructors in the study mentioned the problem of lack of confidence, particularly in speaking, but none of them spoke specifically about any confidence-building measures that they instituted in their classes to enhance the progress of their students. One instructor specifically mentioned the frustration and lack of confidence her students feel in regard to their pronunciation, especially when they could

not make themselves understood. This would certainly be one area in which confidence-building as well as competence-building activities could be used.

One of the most interesting insights that was gained from the interviews with the instructors is that ESL instructors generally have a very limited view of their student's total learning experience, and this skews their perceptions of their students' motivation, progress, and attitude to ESL in general. Instructors are exposed to their students primarily in the classroom and have little or no interaction with them outside of this structured environment. However, the students do have lives beyond the classroom, and learning does not stop when the class comes to an end—a false assumption that ESL instructors often make without being conscious of it. In the previous chapter, it was noted that some of the instructors felt frustrated over the apparent lack of motivation they observed in their students, whereas these students were in fact highly motivated and pursued learning opportunities outside the classroom all on their own. Instructors need to be aware of the fact that language learning takes place all the time that learners are interacting in the second language, and that classroom learning may in fact constitute a relatively minor part of the second language learner's overall learning experience. This is a somewhat humbling realization, but it will make all the difference in how the instructor approaches the task of language teaching. Far too many ESL instructors see what they do in the classroom as the mainstay of their students' learning experience, whereas it is in fact merely an adjunct to the real process of language learning that goes on informally outside the classroom.

In the interviews, instructors indicated that classroom problems may arise from administrative decisions beyond their control.

First is the structure of the program, which is divided into five separate areas or "skills." Although the testing of separate skills is useful for diagnostic purposes, effective advanced language learning depends on the integration of skills, vocabulary, and context. A rigid division makes it difficult to integrate the various skills, an issue that came up repeatedly in the interviews with the instructors. One instructor spoke of her preference for having integrated skills and suggested that reading and writing should be combined into one class and speaking and listening into another. This would make room for a separate pronunciation class, which she felt was necessary, because pronunciation was not included in any systematic way anywhere in the program (but was widely recognized both among the students and the instructors as a problem that needed special attention). In addition to a pronunciation class, a special vocabulary-building class might be added to the program, in response to the students' indication (in Question 12 of the student questionnaires) that they specifically needed more help with developing their vocabulary, which they felt was vital to their success in their future academic careers. Such restructuring of the program would, of course, have to be done at the administrative level.

It should be noted that while the idea of having special classes for pronunciation and vocabulary may appear to be a contradiction of the principle of skill integration being advocated here, this is not really the case. Pronunciation and vocabulary are not communication skills in themselves, but rather, components of the four communication skills. There is no specific *communicative intent* in learning to pronounce English sounds correctly or learning the meanings of new words. Proper pronunciation will enhance spoken communication and a rich vocabulary will enhance all four modes of language-based communication. However, the mechanics of vocal sound production and the technicalities of word construction do not enter directly into the communication process.

Integrating these elements into instruction in the four language skills would only serve as a distraction from the overall communicative intent of verbal and written communication. As a primarily *motor* rather than a *cognitive* skill, pronunciation is best learned when the learners have to concentrate on nothing but the mechanics of sound production, without having to worry about the content of what is being said at the cognitive level, just as a tennis player, for example, might concentrate on doing muscle toning exercises without engaging in anything specifically related to playing tennis and yet be enhancing his or her performance as a tennis player. Furthermore, each group of L1 speakers has its own unique difficulties with pronouncing English sounds, difficulties that are best addressed separately rather than in a combined, integrated class.

Likewise, vocabulary building is a task best accomplished on its own through an analysis of word derivation (i.e., a study of prefixes, roots, and suffixes), semantic relationships between words (such as synonymy and antonymy), and word families. Of course, vocabulary *use* and the skill of determining word meaning within a given textual context will be integrated into the teaching and learning of all four communication skills, but none of these skill areas individually or collectively is the appropriate forum in which to explore the phenomenon of words and their meanings. Harmon and Wood (2008) cite research studies extending as far back as the early 1980s that show "that effective vocabulary instruction places an emphasis on the semantic relationship among words" and that such instruction moves "beyond the definitional level to include activities for presenting words in semantic categories" (p. 3). Instruction of this nature is usually embedded in a reading, writing, or speaking curriculum, but may also require a supplemental curriculum of its own. Extensive research by Bellomo (2009) in implementing a separate "vocabulary curriculum" that is not tied to any other

instructional purpose has produced highly positive results in terms of expanding both L1 and L2 learners' vocabulary in a postsecondary-education setting. This, of course, does not mean that a focus on vocabulary should not be part of the teaching of the four language skills. There, however, the focus should be on vocabulary use, recall, recognition, and reinforcement rather than only on vocabulary building. It is important to note that the purpose of a supplemental vocabulary class with its own special curriculum would be to teach ESL learners vocabulary learning strategies rather than just vocabulary itself. Although the teacher's focus is on helping learners to gain control of important strategies, a major function of these strategies is to enable the learners to continue to learn new words and increase their vocabulary on their own (Nation, 1990).

A second problem beyond instructor control is the amount of time allotted for each class, given the number of students in each class. One of the instructors noted in her interview that she could not give her students individual attention because she had 20 student in her class. There is just not enough time in the normal 50-minute period to have one-to-one contact with each student. She often has to resort to helping them on her own time after class. All the instructors agreed that meeting individual needs is a major challenge, and that a major part of this challenge arises from the large student-teacher ratio. Again, this problem can be dealt with only at the administrative level. As the interview with the administrator revealed, matters, such as space (or lack of it), may be part of the problem in this case. The administrator indicated that a new building was under construction, and it is hoped that the problem of large classes will be alleviated somewhat with the proposed expansion of the program when the building is completed. The broader issue to be noted here is that lack of financial and other resources may interfere with what goes on in the ESL classroom in ways that are not immediately

apparent. This is why it is necessary to take a holistic approach to ESL program design, as advocated by Carter and Nunan (2001) and discussed in Chapter Two. In holistic approaches, the individual parts of the program are designed within the constraints under which the program must operate.

A third issue of a systemic nature is the choice of textbooks. In the interviews, most instructors indicated directly that they should be allowed to select their own textbooks, and failing that, at least that they should be given a greater voice in determining which textbooks are used in their classrooms. The administrator, in her interview, insisted that the teachers' input is considered in the choice of textbooks. This appears quite contradictory, especially in light of the fact that the instructors were unanimous in expressing their displeasure with the speaking textbook, in particular, one instructor even saying that it was useless. The only way to explain this discrepancy is to say that there may well be a breakdown in communication between the instructors and the coordinators (the ones who actually select the textbooks). The issue of communication flow will be taken up in greater detail below.

A fourth "global" issue that cannot be addressed at the "local" level of the classroom is the ethnic and linguistic makeup of classes. Several instructors expressed a preference for having more ethnically and linguistically diverse classes. A better mix would encourage greater use of English during class time and less reliance on the learners' first language. For example, when students of the same linguistic group are assigned to work in pairs or groups, they inevitably end up speaking to each other in their first language rather than in English unless strong incentives are used to encourage them to use English. If the class is composed predominantly of one linguistic group (Chinese, in the case of ELP classes), it is impossible to avoid pairing or grouping students who

have the same first language. And when they speak in their first language, it is extremely difficult to monitor their interaction or to get them to stop and use English. Administrators, of course, have little control in this matter either, since they must accept all applicants who meet all the eligibility requirements, regardless of how this will affect the ethnic and linguistic makeup of classes.

A fifth issue is the creation of tests. One of the instructors was of the opinion that the system currently in place is inefficient and wastes time. She suggested the creation of a test bank, which all instructors could draw from instead of having to create their own tests each time for each class and coordinate these tests with the tests of other teachers who teach the same language area at the same level. This excellent suggestion would have to be implemented administratively across the entire program, rather than at the classroom level.

One overarching theme that ties all the administrative issues together is the flow of communication between students and instructors, on the one hand, and administrators on the other. In the discussion of textbook selection, it was noted that there appears to be a communication gap such that the students and instructors are not able to make their voice heard when it comes to their dissatisfaction with certain textbooks. This communication gap is not limited to the issue of textbooks, but appears to run through various aspects of the program. Feedback from students and instructors may be filtered by several factors, not the least of which is a natural reluctance to speak freely to administrators on sensitive matters or when criticizing the program. Students and instructors might be more willing to express their concerns and frustrations to one another or to an outsider (such as a researcher) than to someone in authority over them. The disparity between the administrator's account of the program (as outlined at the end

of Chapter Four) and the students' and instructors' accounts indicates that the communication lines to the administrators need to open up and that the chief administrator needs to assume ultimate responsibility for making sure that an atmosphere is created in which feedback, both positive and negative, flows freely in all directions and that what is supposed to happen in theory actually happens in practice.

The interview with the administrator shed some light on the administrative and logistical factors that work against meeting the needs and addressing the frustrations of students and instructors. However, the most interesting idea to come out of the interview was the idea of focusing less on general ESL and more on ESP (English for Specific Purposes). The future of English language instruction for adults clearly lies in the direction of ESP, and it is advisable for programs like the ELP to start planning a restructuring so as to be responsive to student goals and needs.

The shift in focus from ESL to ESP might be the first step in achieving the sort of flexibility that is needed to meet individual needs in the classroom. Such flexibility needs to be built into the program at the systemic level. It is beyond the scope of this study in general, and the present chapter in particular, to suggest ways in which flexibility can be built into ESL programs. That is an area for a separate investigation in itself, given the wide range of issues that are involved; each issue might conceivably involve a separate strategy. However, some general principles might be suggested here that administrators should take note of. First, fixed time frames (14 weeks per level), rigid divisions into separate language areas (the five so-called "skills"), and clear-cut level distinctions (six levels) reduce flexibility. Second, top-down management practices (such as prescribed textbooks and administratively determined class size) inhibit the instructor's ability to respond flexibly to unique situations and individual needs. Third, catering to the mean

(the one-size-fits-all approach) makes it more difficult to meet the needs of those on the margins. It is interesting that the administrator did not address any of these issues directly in the interview. However, as the overall findings of this study have shown, administrators need to concern themselves with what happens at the classroom level because their global administrative decisions inevitably trickle down to the level of the individual student and the individual instructor and often have a negative impact on the language learning and language teaching experience.

Closely related to the topic of meeting individual needs is the issue of individualized evaluation protocols and procedures. This was one of the major issues that emerged from the interview with the administrator. In the analysis of the administrator's response to Question 11 in Chapter Four, Patton (2002) was quoted as saying that an essential part of the process of individualized instruction is *individualized evaluation of outcomes*, with a focus on qualitative rather than quantitative criteria and instruments. This conclusion is based on the assumption that in a highly individualized program, "outcomes will be different for different clients. Not only will outcomes vary along specific common dimensions, but outcomes will be qualitatively different and will involve qualitatively different dimensions for different clients" (Patton, 2002, p. 154). Instituting individualized evaluation would mean a major overhaul in the way the ELP evaluates its own effectiveness, and it is obviously a change that would have to be instituted at the administrative or systemic level, but it would pay off in the long run by providing a more realistic picture of the true outcomes of the instruction delivered by the program and thus serve as a means of program "quality enhancement" (Patton, 2002, p. 148). It is conceivable that the new evaluation protocol would look very similar to the method used in conducting the present research project, or at least that the present study

will serve as a model for the development of self-evaluation instruments for language training programs such as the ELP.

It is hoped that the findings of this study, will help administrators, program planners, textbook writers, and others involved in language teaching and learning to understand better the processes that operate in the classroom. An understanding of the learning dynamics of language learners can go a long way towards creating more effective language training programs and more learner-friendly learning environments in general.

Limitations

This study was conducted under several constraints, which the investigator acknowledges with regret. The most obvious of these is the small sample size: only 17 students participated in the study, and of them only 5 had taken both entry and exit tests. This, no doubt, skews the findings somewhat, as it presents a very small cross-section of the ESL student population in the ELP. However, a small sample size is very much in keeping with the narrative method followed in this study, and from a qualitative point of view it made possible a highly in-depth focus on individual experience in the ELP learning environment, which would not have been possible with a larger sample size.

An unexpected limitation relating to sample size that turned up when the data were analyzed was that only 64.7% of the sample had come to Canada with the intention of getting a university education in this country. It was assumed early on that the overwhelming majority of students in the ELP were in Canada for the purpose of getting a diploma or degree from a Canadian college or university. Given that 35.3% of the students in the sample were in the ELP just to improve their English and would be returning to their home country without attending university in Canada, it was impossible

to develop a true sense of how well the ELP was preparing its students to pursue postsecondary education in this country. This had the effect of reducing the sample size even further, bringing it down to 11 in effect, since only 11 out of the 17 students intended to go on to study at a university in Canada.

A similar limitation is the time constraint. The data were collected during one ELP term of 14 weeks. Ideally, the students in the study should have been followed over a longer period of time, as discussed in Chapter Two. This would have provided more accurate results in terms of the progress they made in their language learning and might have made it possible to assess the learners' development of CALP and preparation for further study. It would also have provided insight into how each individual learner's perceptions of his or her learning needs change over time as he or she advances through the language learning experience. As noted in Chapter Two, Richterich (1983) pointed out that needs are in a constant state of flux, coming and going according to the prevailing circumstances.

A third limitation is the age of the participants: their ages ranged from 19 to 26 years, with a mean age of 21.53 years. Clearly, this age group is not representative of the entire group of second-language speakers studying at Canadian universities. Mature students, such as those who might be doing graduate or postgraduate studies, were not represented at all, and it is almost certain that they would have different needs and goals and a somewhat different perspective on language learning.

A fourth limitation is the extremely narrow range of countries and linguistic backgrounds represented in the sample: 76.47% of the participants were from China, and 82.35% claimed Chinese (Mandarin / Cantonese) as their first language. From a regional perspective, the Far East was the only world region represented in the study. It was hoped

initially that a wider range of backgrounds would be represented. Unfortunately, other regions and linguistic backgrounds were not included in this study; thus, it was impossible to present a compare the needs of different ethnic and linguistic groups.

Finally, as mentioned at the outset, the study consciously limited itself to Levels 3, 4, and 5 of the ELP. Students in lower levels were not represented in the study, even though they might have indicated different needs and preferences from higher level students. Even within the three levels included in this study, there was not an even distribution across the range. Level 4 was overrepresented, accounting for 64.71% of the participants. Level 3 was grossly underrepresented, with only 1 participant among the 17. Clearly, the findings of the study are biased in favour of those in Level 4, which represents a fairly advanced degree of proficiency in English. However, this may not be a serious drawback, given that the purpose of this study was to investigate the preparedness of ELP students to function successfully in the academic and social environment of Canadian universities, where they would be expected to communicate in English with near-native fluency.

For greater reliability and applicability, a larger-scale, long-term study is recommended. In addition, the participants need to be drawn from a wider variety of backgrounds (in this study the majority of the participants were from the same demographic background). Such a study could provide a broader perspective on the range of needs of language learners and the differences in these needs that arise from background factors such as country of origin, culture, first language, and so on. Despite its limitations, this study is a valuable first step in formulating a methodological approach to research in this area. I hope that it will inspire other researchers to expand the investigation by building upon the foundation that has been laid here.

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Appendix A

Student Questionnaire

Date:

Part 1: Background Information

1. Sex: Male_____ Female_____
2. Age _____
3. E-mail address _____
4. What country are you from? _____
5. What is your first language? _____
6. Is English a second language for you? If not, what is? _____
7. How long have you been in Canada? _____
8. Program of study _____
9. Year of study _____
10. Did you study English in your own country? _____
    If so, how long (months or years)? _____
11. Did you study English in another foreign country before coming to Canada? If so, please list the country (or countries) and the amount of time you spent there learning English.

Country:	Amount of Time:
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

12. How long have you studied English in Canada (months or years)? _____
13. Which of the following standardized tests have you taken: TOEFL, TOEIC, MELAB, etc? For each test taken, please give the (approximate) score you received.

    _____

Part 2: Language Learning

1. What percentage of the English communication that takes place in your classroom do you think you understand? _____

2. Please indicate how important you think each of the following skills is for success in the class you are taking. Use the following 5-point scale.
    1. Not at all important
    2. Somewhat important
    3. Fairly important
    4. Important
    5. Very important

    Reading _____

    Writing _____

    Speaking _____

    Listening _____

    Grammar _____

    Others _____ Please specify: _____

3. Please indicate how important each of the following activities in English is to your success as an international student at a Canadian university. Use the following 5-point scale.
    1. Not at all important
    2. Somewhat important
    3. Fairly important
    4. Important
    5. Very important

    I. Spoken Language
        1. understanding lectures _____
        2. understanding instructions _____
        3. discussing issues in class _____
        4. giving talks/presentations/seminars _____
        5. asking questions in class _____
        6. discussing issues with classmates _____
        7. discussing issues with instructors _____
        8. understanding talks/presentations/seminars _____

    II. Written Language
        1. reading textbooks/books _____

2. reading articles/journals _____
3. reading course handouts _____
4. taking notes in class _____
5. writing short papers (4-5 pages) _____
6. writing long papers (10-20 pages) _____
7. answering questions related to part of the textbooks _____
8. writing exams _____

4. Please indicate how important each of the following skills is for success in the other classes you have taken. Use the following 5-point scale.
    1. Not at all important
    2. Somewhat important
    3. Fairly important
    4. Important
    5. Very important

    Reading _____

    Writing _____

    Speaking _____

    Listening _____

    Grammar _____

    Others _____ Please specify: _____

5. For each of the following English language skills, please indicate your level of confidence in your ability in that skill. Use a scale from 0 to 100 (100 indicates the *highest* level of confidence).

    Reading _____

    Writing _____

    Speaking _____

    Listening _____

    Grammar _____

    Others _____ Please specify: _____

6. Please rank your ability in the following English language skills in descending order, from the one that needs the most improvement (1) to the one that needs the least improvement (5 or 6).

Reading _____

Writing _____

Speaking _____

Listening _____

Grammar _____

Others _____ Please specify: _____

7. Please indicate how helpful you find the activities that your teacher assigns you for each of the following skill areas. Use the following 5-point scale.
    1. Not at all helpful
    2. Somewhat helpful
    3. Fairly helpful
    4. Helpful
    5. Very helpful

Reading _____

Writing _____

Speaking _____

Listening _____

Grammar _____

Others _____ Please specify: _____

8. What specific strategies do you use to improve your ability in the following areas?

Reading _____

Writing _____

Speaking _____

Listening _____

Grammar _____

Other (please specify): _____

9. What percentage of your outside-the-classroom communication in English do you think you understand? _____

10. What specific situations or activities do you need English language for?

_____

11. What activities do you need the English language for?

_____

12. What English language skills do you think you need to develop the most in order to be successful in outside-the-classroom communication in English?

_____

13. What would you recommend to other international students who would like to improve their English language skills outside the classroom?

_____

14. What would you recommend to other international students who would like to improve their English language before they come to Canada?

_____

Appendix B

Instructor Questionnaire

Date:

Part 1: Background Information

1. Sex:
2. First Language:
3. Other Languages:
4. Education:
5. Department:
6. Number of Years of Teaching Experience:
7. Courses Taught:

Part 2: Language Teaching

1. In what percentage of the activities in the following three phases is English used or involved in your classroom?

   Pre-Activity Phase _____

   Activity Phase _____

   Post-Activity Phase _____

2. In what percentage of the activities in the following skill areas is English used or involved in your classroom?

   Reading _____

   Writing _____

   Speaking _____

   Listening _____

   Grammar _____

   Others _____ Please specify:

3. Which of the following language skills do you address in your teaching?

   Reading:

   Writing:

   Speaking:

   Listening:

   Grammar:

   Others: Please specify:

4. Please rate the degree of importance of each of the following language skills for the course you are teaching. Use the following 5-point scale.
   1. Not at all important
   2. Somewhat important
   3. Fairly important
   4. Important
   5. Very important

   Reading _____

   Writing _____

   Speaking _____

   Listening _____

   Grammar _____

   Others: Please specify:

5. Please rate the degree of importance of each of the following language skills for success at university. Use the following 5-point scale.
   1. Not at all important
   2. Somewhat important
   3. Fairly important
   4. Important
   5. Very important

   Reading _____

   Writing _____

Speaking _____

Listening _____

Grammar _____

Others: Please specify:

Appendix C

Student Interview Questions

1. How long do you intend to study in Canada and for what purpose?

2. What are your concerns as a student in Canada?

3. What are you concerns about learning English in Canada?

4. What information would you like to have before you enter your program?

5. What information should be given to students when they first arrive?

6. What kinds of learning experiences would you like to have that will help you achieve your best?

7. What do you find to be most and least helpful to you in improving your spoken English?

8. What do you find to be most and least helpful to you in improving your written English?

9. What do you find to be most and least helpful to you in improving your understanding of spoken English?

10. What do you find to be most and least helpful to you in improving your understanding of written English?

11. What do you think about the textbooks used in the ELP?

12. What is your opinion on studying with native and non-native English speakers in the ELP?

Appendix D

Instructor Interview Questions

1. What language skills do you think your students find to be the most challenging in your classroom?

2. What problems or difficulties with English do you encounter or observe among the learners in your classroom?

3. What specific strategies do you use to address the problems or difficulties with English that you encounter or observe among the learners in your classroom?

4. Which of the activities that you use in your classroom do you find the most effective?

5. What do you think you can do to make the language learning of the learners in your classroom more effective?

Appendix E

Administrator Interview Questions

1. What are the purpose and expected outcomes of the ELP?

2. What policies or criteria do you use in deciding which international students to accept into the ELP?

3. What policies or criteria do you use in hiring instructors for the ELP?

4. What policies or criteria do you use in selecting textbooks for the ELP?

5. What changes have you seen over the years since you assumed the position of Assistant Director of the ELP?

6. What kinds of students do you think have been successful in acquiring university-level proficiency in English through the ELP?

7. Is there any specific training required for ELP instructors? What kind of training does the ELP provide for its instructors, if any?

8. What do you consider to be the greatest challenge (or challenges) facing ELP students, instructors, and the program itself? How do you address this challenge (or these challenges)?

9. In what way do you think the ELP could be modified and improved to maximize the benefit to its students, instructors, and the program itself?

10. How do you or the ELP address feedback and/or comments from both the students and instructors?

11. What mechanisms do you have in place for determining whether the ELP meets the needs and expectations of the students in the program?

12. How effective do you think the ELP is in enhancing the students' performance both academically and socially? In what way(s) is it effective?

Appendix F

Research Ethics Board Clearance Letter

Brock University
Office of Research Services
Research Ethics Office
St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada L2S 3A1
T: 905-688-5550, Ext. 3035/4876 F: 905-688-0748
www.brocku.ca

DATE: July 5, 2007

FROM: Michelle McGinn, Chair
Research Ethics Board (REB)

Michelle K. McG

TO: Merle Richards, Education
Thinan Sangpanasthada

FILE: 06-330 SANGPANASTHADA

TITLE: Identifying Language Needs of English as a Second Language Students in a Canadian University based Intensive English Language Program

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The Brock University Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above research proposal.

DECISION: ACCEPTED

This project has received ethics clearance for the period of **July 5, 2007 to August 30, 2008** subject to full REB ratification at the Research Ethics Board's next scheduled meeting. The clearance period may be extended upon request. ***The study may now proceed.***

Please note that the Research Ethics Board (REB) requires that you adhere to the protocol as last reviewed and cleared by the REB. During the course of research no deviations from, or changes to, the protocol, recruitment, or consent form may be initiated without prior written clearance from the REB. The Board must provide clearance for any modifications before they can be implemented. If you wish to modify your research project, please refer to http://www.brocku.ca/researchservices/forms to complete the appropriate form Revision or Modification to an Ongoing Application.

Adverse or unexpected events must be reported to the REB as soon as possible with an indication of how these events affect, in the view of the Principal Investigator, the safety of the participants and the continuation of the protocol.

If research participants are in the care of a health facility, at a school, or other institution or community organization, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the ethical guidelines and clearance of those facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of any research protocols.

The Tri-Council Policy Statement requires that ongoing research be monitored. A Final Report is required for all projects upon completion of the project. Researchers with projects lasting more than one year are required to submit a Continuing Review Report annually. The Office of Research Services will contact you when this form *Continuing Review/Final Report* is required.

Please quote your REB file number on all future correspondence.

MM/kw

Appendix G

Background Information of Students

1-1

Students / Background Information	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4
Sex	Female	Male	Male	Female
Age	23	23	26	19
Country	China	China	South Korea	China
First Language	Chinese	Chinese	Korean	Chinese
Second Language	English	English	English	English
Amount of time in Canada	9 mths.	1.5 yrs.	5 mths.	1 yr.
Program of study and level	ELP (4)	ELP (4)	ELP (3)	ELP (5)
Amount of ESL instruction in Canada (in months/years)	9 mths.	1.5 yrs.	5 mths.	1 yrs.
Amount of in-country ESL instruction (in years)	12 yrs.	9 yrs.	9 yrs.	6 yrs.
ESL instruction in other country and amount of time (in years)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Standardized tests (TOEFL, TOEIC, MELAB, etc.) and Score	IELTS/5.5	N/A	TOEIC/750	N/A

1-2

Students / Background Information	Student 5	Student 6	Student 7	Student 8
Sex	Male	Female	Male	Male
Age	20	21	20	21
Country	China	China	China	China
First Language	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese
Second Language	English	English	English	English
Amount of time in Canada	2 yrs.	1 yr.	10 mths.	2 yrs.
Program of study and level	ELP (5)	ELP (5)	ELP (5)	ELP (4)
Amount of ESL instruction in Canada (in months/years)	2 yrs.	1 yrs.	10 mths.	2 yrs.
Amount of in-country ESL instruction (in years)	6 yrs.	8 yrs.	6 yrs.	8 yrs.
ESL instruction in other country and amount of time (in years)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Standardized tests (TOEFL, TOEIC, MELAB, etc.) and Score	TOEFL/570	N/A	IELTS/6	N/A

1-3

Students / Background Information	Student 9	Student 10	Student 11	Student 12
Sex	Female	Female	Female	Female
Age	21	19	19	26
Country	South Korea	China	China	South Korea
First Language	Korean	Chinese	Chinese	Korean
Second Language	English	English	English	English
Amount of time in Canada	4 mths.	6 mths.	6 mths.	8 mths.
Program of study and level	ELP (4)	ELP (4)	ELP (4)	ELP (4)
Amount of ESL instruction in Canada (in months/years)	4 mths.	6 mths.	6 mths.	8 mths.
Amount of in-country ESL instruction (in years)	6 yrs.	6 yrs.	6 yrs.	6 yrs.
ESL instruction in other country and amount of time (in years)	N/A	N/A	Australia (1 Month)	N/A
Standardized tests (TOEFL, TOEIC, MELAB, etc.) and Score	N/A	N/A	N/A	IELTS

1-4

Students / Background Information	Student 13	Student 14	Student 15	Student 16	Student 17
Sex	Female	Female	Male	Male	Male
Age	22	20	25	20	21
Country	China	China	China	Taiwan	China
First Language	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese
Second Language	English	English	English	English	English
Amount of time in Canada	1 yr.	1.5 yrs.	2.5 yrs.	1.5 yrs.	11 mths.
Program of study and level	ELP (4)	ELP (4)	ELP (4)	ELP (5)	ELP (4)
Amount of ESL instruction in Canada (in months/years)	1 yr.	1.5 yrs.	1.5 yrs.	1.5 yrs.	11 mths.
Amount of in-country ESL instruction (in years)	10 yrs.	6 yrs.	5 yrs.	3 yrs.	10 yrs.
ESL instruction in other country and amount of time (in years)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Standardized tests (TOEFL, TOEIC, MELAB, etc.) and Score	TOEFL/550	IELTS	TOEFL/530	N/A	N/A